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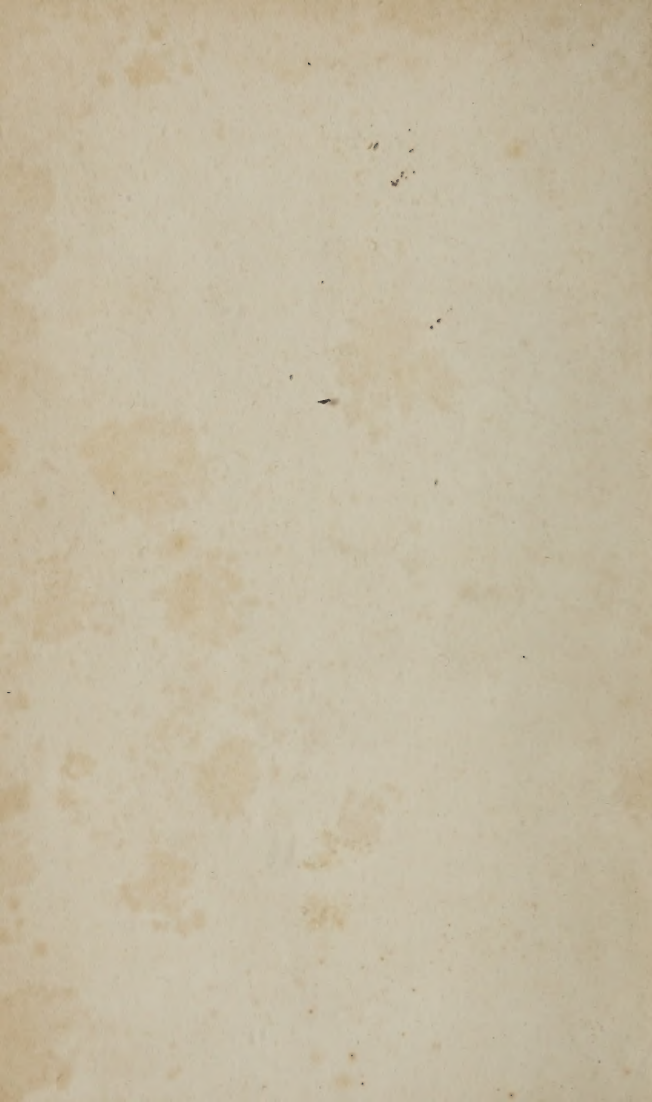
Dr. Middleton's letter from  
 Rome











DR. MIDDLETON'S

# LETTER FROM ROME,

SHOWING AN EXACT CONFORMITY BETWEEN

## POPERY AND PAGANISM ;

OR,

THE RELIGION OF THE PRESENT ROMANS DERIVED  
FROM THAT OF THEIR HEATHEN ANCESTORS,

WITH

### THE AUTHOR'S DEFENCE

AGAINST A ROMAN CATHOLIC OPPONEN'

---

WITH

AN INTRODUCTORY-ESSAY AND NOTES,

BY JOHN DOWLING, D. D.

Author of "History of Romanism," &c., &c.

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## INTRODUCTORY ESSAY.

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IN the remarkable conversation held by HIM, who spake as "never man spake," with the woman of Samaria, our blessed Lord uttered the following significant and memorable prediction: "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.—But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in SPIRIT and in TRUTH."—John 4: 21, 23. As though he had said: 'Vain are now the disputes between Samaritans and Jews, as to the contending claims of the temples of Gerizim or of Jerusalem; the hour is speedily approaching when the peculiar worship of Jehovah shall no longer be confined to any special locality. The dispensation of Moses is soon to pass away, with its ceremonial observances, its ritual sacrifices, and its temple worship. The shadow is to be superseded by the substance; the type, by that which it was designed to repre-

sent.—Hitherto, Samaritans and Jews have alike approached unto the Father amid the pomp of external worship, with rites, ceremonies, and sacrifices : in future, the true worshippers, no longer relying on outward ceremonies for acceptance, shall worship Him in *spirit*. Hitherto he has been approached, through the medium of types and shadows ; soon his servants shall worship him in *truth* ;—in the *true* way of direct approach to God, through Him who is the way, the truth, and the life.’

In accordance with this prediction, we find that the worship of the early Christians was pre-eminently a spiritual worship. Whether we examine the inspired record of the Acts of the Apostles with their spiritual and instructive epistles, or the authentic ecclesiastical history of the first century of its existence, we find that Primitive Christianity was emphatically a religion of *spirit*, in distinction from a religion of *form*. Whether the early disciples assembled for worship in private dwellings, in open fields, in desert places, or in “dens and caves of the earth,”—as they were then compelled by persecution to do,—they met, not to renew the obsolete rites and sacrifices of Judaism, or to imitate the gorgeous and profane ceremonies of Paganism, but to “worship HIM who is a Spirit in spirit and in truth.”

When the great Apostle of the Gentiles preached the gospel and planted Christian churches in Rome,

in Corinth, or in Ephesus, nothing could exhibit a more complete and striking contrast than that between the pure and spiritual worship which he established, and the pompous heathen ceremonies, in the same cities, of the priests of Jupiter, Venus, or Diana. They were as widely different as light from darkness ; as utterly opposed as Christ and Belial ; as far asunder as heaven and hell.

To deepen our impression of this contrast, let us, in imagination, forgetful of the lapse of eighteen centuries, transport ourselves back to the days of the Cæsars, and, in the city of Rome, enter yon Heathen temple, which lifts its stately dome to the clouds, high above all the surrounding edifices. Dedicated to all the gods, and therefore called the Pantheon, it stands pre-eminent among the four hundred Pagan temples of the proud capital of the ancient world. As we enter, the first objects which meet our eye are the statues of Jupiter, Neptune, Pluto and Apollo ; of Juno, Diana, Minerva and Venus ; and a multitude of other images of heathen deities, demigods and heroes.—It is the hour of worship, on some grand national occasion. The *Pontifex Maximus*, or chief priest, dressed in his flowing robe of ceremony, called the *toga prætexta*, with the *galerus*, or cap made of the skin of a sacrificed victim, on his head, marches in stately procession over the marble pavement, attended by the college of *pontifices*, the *augurs* and *haruspices*, in their priestly vestments ; some of them with lighted

wax candles in their hands, others with their *aspergilla*, or sprinkling-brushes, scattering holy water as they go ; while the air is filled with the odour of the incense arising from the smoking censers borne by the white-robed youths attendant upon the priests, who proceed, amid the admiring gaze of the multitude, to extend their victims upon the altars, and offer them in sacrifice to the consecrated images of Jupiter, Juno or Minerva.

By the side of this heathen temple, and almost under the shadow of its walls, is a humble dwelling. As we enter, we behold a group of attentive and interested Christian worshippers. They are hanging upon the lips of one whose countenance betokens his descent, as a son of Abraham, while he preaches to them Jesus and the resurrection ; and then together they unite in solemn prayer and praise to Father, Son, and Spirit. And who is this faithful herald of the Cross who thus dares, under the very shadow of the idol temples of Rome, to preach the gospel of the “ crucified One,” and to declare, “ I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth ”? It is the great Apostle to the Gentiles, who “ for two whole years dwelt in his own hired house (in the city of Rome), preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ.”—Acts 28 : 30, 31.

The former is a picture of Pagan, the latter of primitive Christian worship. Is it possible to con-



ceive a more complete contrast, a more entire contrariety, than that between the one of these scenes and the other? The former, all pomp and pageantry and form and show, a company of Pagan worshippers, offering their idolatrous sacrifices to gods of marble or of brass;—the latter, all simplicity, reverence, and spirituality; a company of true worshippers, worshipping the Father in spirit and in truth.

An equally vivid contrast might be drawn between the simple and spiritual worship of the primitive disciples in Antioch, where they were first honored with the name of Christians, and the voluptuous Pagan rites of the neighboring groves of Daphne; or between that of the disciples of Corinth, who were “washed” and “sanctified” and “justified,” and the licentious yet superstitious devotees of the famed temple of Venus in that polluted city; or that of the “faithful” Ephesians “accepted in the beloved,” and those worshippers of a Pagan goddess, who filled the air with their frantic shouts, “Great is Diana of the Ephesians.”

In contemplating these entirely opposite characters and modes of worship, we are irresistibly led to the conclusion that primitive Christianity and Paganism had no element in common, that fire and water might as readily have been brought to amalgamate with each other, and the antipodes have been as easily united; and the supposition that such a resemblance should at any time exist be-

tween these two systems of worship, that the one might be mistaken for the other, appears like the very acme of absurdity and extravagance.

Yet it is a fact too well established to admit of doubt or denial, that for twelve centuries\* or upwards, a system of religious worship has existed supported by a vast and powerful hierarchy, having its head-quarters in the city of Rome, called by the name of Christianity, but possessing the closest possible resemblance to Paganism. In the rank and orders of its priesthood, from the Pontifex Maximus or Pope, downward, through every gradation, in its pompous and imposing ceremonies of worship, as well as in the images, whom it reverences or adores—almost identically the same. This resemblance is so striking, as well as so extensive, as to force upon us the conviction that the elder is the parent of the younger; and that not the spiritual religion of the despised Nazarene, that gospel which Paul preached, but Romish Paganism, such as it was in the days of Cicero, or of Virgil, is the source from which is derived, and the model upon which is framed the whole fabric of Romish Papal worship.

The scholar, familiar as he is with the classic

\* The writer considers the epoch of the birth of Popery, properly speaking, to be A. D. 606, when the supremacy of the Bishop of Rome was finally established, by the decree of the tyrant and murderer Phocas, conferring upon that dignitary the title of Universal Bishop. For a particular account of this event, and of the principal actors therein, see Dowling's History of Romanism, Book I., chapters 5, 6,—pp. 50-64.

descriptions of ancient mythology, when like the learned author of the "Letter from Rome" he becomes an eye-witness to the ceremonies of Papal worship, cannot avoid recognizing their close resemblance, if not their absolute identity. The temples of Jupiter, Diana, Venus, or Apollo; their altars smoking with incense; their boys in sacred habits, holding the incense box, and attending upon the priests; their holy water at the entrance of the temples, with their *aspergilla* or sprinkling brushes; their *thuribula*, or vessels of incense; their ever-burning lamps before the statues of their deities; are irresistibly brought before his mind, whenever he visits a Roman Catholic place of worship, and witnesses precisely the same things.

If a Roman scholar of the age of the Cæsars, who, previous to his death, had formed some acquaintance with the religion of the despised Nazarene, had in the seventh or eighth century arisen from his grave in the Campus Martius, and wandered into the spacious church of Constantine at Rome, which then stood on the spot now occupied by Saint Peter's; if he had there witnessed these institutions of Paganism, which were then, and ever since have been, incorporated with the worship of Rome, would he not have come to the conclusion that he had found his way into some temple dedicated to Diana, Venus, or Apollo, rather than into a Christian place of worship, where the successors of Peter the fisherman, or Paul the tent-maker, had

met for the worship of Jesus of Nazareth? It is impossible to conceive of a greater contrast than that which is presented between the plain and simple rites of primitive apostolic Christian worship in the first century, and the pompous and imposing spectacle of Papal worship, in the seventh, performed in some stately cathedral, adorned with its altars, pictures, images, and burning wax-lights; with all the array of holy water, smoking incense, tinkling bells, and priests and boys arrayed in gaudy-colored vestments, as they were seen in the time of Boniface, the first of the Popes, and as they are still seen, with but little change, after the lapse of a dozen centuries.

With these incontestable facts before us, it becomes an interesting subject of inquiry—How was this transformation effected? Was this change, from the simplicity and spirituality of primitive Christian worship, to the pomp and ceremony of Paganism, sudden, or gradual? And after the transformation was complete, was the church of Rome to be regarded as a true church of Christ, or as a fulfillment of the predicted apostacy from the faith?\*

To give a full answer to these inquiries, to state the proofs at length, that the church of Rome is not a church of Christ, but Antichrist, and to trace the gradual steps by which the ceremonies of Pagan

\* See 2 Thess. ii. 1-10; 1 Tim. iv. 1, 2, 3.

worship were introduced into its ritual—would extend the present remarks far beyond the appropriate limits of an introductory essay. We can only, therefore, briefly refer to the probable period of the commencement of this corruption of Christian worship, and cite the concurring testimonies of two or three respectable authorities as to the reality of the corruption, and the causes that gave it birth.

The practice of accommodating the forms of Christian worship to the prejudices of heathen nations, was introduced in various places long before the establishment of the papal supremacy in 606; though, of course, as there was, previous to that date, no acknowledged earthly sovereign and head of the church, the observance of these heathen rites was not regarded as obligatory upon all, till enjoined by the newly established papal authority, in the seventh century.

It is not unlikely that this policy, in its incipient stage, commenced by a mistaken, but well-intended desire of some good men, like the Apostle Paul, to “become all things to all men,” that they might “by all means save some.” Yet this apology can by no means be admitted as an excuse for the almost entire subversion of Christianity in the Romish communion by the adoption of these heathen rites, ceremonies, and superstitions.

The ancient heathen nations had always been accustomed to a variety of imposing ceremonies in their religious services, hence they looked with con-



tempt upon the simplicity of Christian worship, destitute as it was of these pompous and magnificent rites, and it was a step pregnant with disaster to the cause of genuine Christianity, when, as early as the third century, some advocated the necessity of admitting a portion of the ancient ceremonies to which the people had been accustomed, for the purpose of rendering Christian worship more striking and captivating to the outward senses. As a proof that Christianity began thus early to be corrupted, it is related in the life of Gregory, bishop of New Cesarea, surnamed *Thaumaturgus*, or Wonder-worker, that “when he perceived that the ignorant multitude persisted in their idolatry, on account of the pleasures and sensual gratifications which they enjoyed at the pagan festivals, he granted them a permission to indulge themselves in the like pleasures, in celebrating the memory of the holy martyrs, hoping, that, in process of time, they would return, of their own accord, to a more virtuous and regular course of life.”

“This addition of external rites,” says Mosheim, “was also designed to remove the opprobrious calumnies which the Jewish and Pagan priests cast upon the Christians, on account of the simplicity of their worship, esteeming them little better than atheists, because they had no *temples, altars, victims, priests*, nor any thing of that external pomp in which the vulgar are so prone to place the essence of religion. The rulers of the church adopted,

therefore, certain external ceremonies, that thus they might captivate the senses of the vulgar, and be able to refute the reproaches of their adversaries, thus obscuring the native lustre of the gospel, in order to extend its influence, and making it lose, in point of real excellence, what it gained in point of popular esteem.”\*

Subsequent to the conversion of Constantine in the fourth century, when Christianity was taken under the protection of the state, this sinful conformity to the practices of Paganism increased to such a degree, that the beauty and simplicity of Christian worship were almost entirely obscured, and by the time these corruptions were ripe for the establishment of the Popedom, Christianity—the Christianity of the state—to judge from the institutions of its public worship—seemed but little else than a system of *Christianized Paganism*.

In his account of the fourth century, Mosheim remarks, that “the rites and institutions by which the Greeks, Romans, and other nations, had formerly testified their religious veneration for fictitious deities were now adopted, with some slight alterations, by Christian bishops, and employed in the service of the true God. These fervent heralds of the gospel, whose zeal outran their candor and ingenuity, imagined that the nations would receive Christianity with more facility, when they saw the

\* Mosheim, Cent. II., Part 2, Chap. 4.

rites and ceremonies to which they were accustomed, adopted in the church, and the same worship paid to Christ and his martyrs, which they had formerly offered to their idol deities. Hence it happened, that in these times, the religion of the Greeks and Romans differed very little, in its external appearance, from that of the Christians. They had both a most pompous and splendid ritual. Gorgeous robes, mitres, tiaras, wax tapers, crosiers, processions, lustrations, images, gold and silver vases, and many such circumstances of pageantry, were equally to be seen in the heathen temples and the Christian churches.” \*

A distinguished member of the establishment in Great Britain, Dean Waddington, confirms this testimony. “The copious transfusion of heathen ceremonies into Christian worship, which had taken place before the end of the fourth century,” says Mr. W., “had, to a certain extent, *paganized* (if we may so express it) the outward form and aspect of religion, and these ceremonies became more general and more numerous, and, so far as the calamities of the times would permit, more splendid in the age which followed. To console the convert for the loss of his favorite festival, others of a different name, but similar description, were introduced; and the simple and serious occupation of spiritual devotion was beginning to degenerate into a worship

\* Mosheim, Cent. IV., Part 2, Chap. 4.

of parade and demonstration, for a mere scene of riotous festivity.”\*

The same testimony is given by the celebrated Archibald Bower, the historian of the popes, and a remarkable instance of this time-serving policy of conciliating heathen nations by adopting their pagan ceremonies, is related by him in his account of the attempts of Gregory the Great to introduce the religion of Rome among our ancestors in Great Britain. It was in the year 596 that Austin the monk, a missionary from Gregory, had landed upon the coast of Kent. The account which the learned historian gives of Gregory's instructions to the missionary monk relative to the policy he should observe towards the islanders, in his attempts to convert them to Christianity, is as follows. “Not satisfied,” says Bower, “with directing Austin not to destroy, but to reserve for the worship of God, the profane *places* where the pagan Saxons had worshipped idols, Gregory would have him treat the more profane *usages, rites, and ceremonies* of the pagans in the same manner, that is, not to abolish, but to sanctify them, by changing the end for which they were instituted, and introduce them, thus sanctified, into the Christian worship. This he specifies in a particular ceremony. ‘Whereas it is a custom,’ says he, ‘among the Saxons, to slay abundance of oxen, and sacrifice them to the devil,

\* Waddington's Hist. Ch., p. 118.

you must not abolish that custom, but appoint a new festival to be kept, either on the day of the consecration of the churches, or of the birth-day of the saints whose relics are deposited there, and on these days the Saxons may be allowed to make arbors round the temples changed into churches, to kill their oxen, and to feast, as they did while they were still pagans, only they shall offer their thanks and praises, not to the devil, but to God.' This advice, absolutely irreconcilable with the purity of the gospel-worship, the pope founds on a pretended impossibility of weaning men at once from rites and ceremonies to which they have been long accustomed, and on the hopes of bringing the converts, in due time, by such an indulgence, to a better sense of their duty to God. Thus was the religion of the Saxons, our ancestors, so disfigured and corrupted with all the superstitions of Paganism, at its first being planted among them, that it scarce deserved the name of Christianity, but was rather a mixture of Christianity and Paganism, or Christianity and Paganism moulded, as it were, into a third religion.'\*"

When pope Boniface, in the year 606, was invested, by the emperor Phocas, with supreme authority over all the churches of the empire, he not only adopted all the pagan ceremonies that had previously, in various places, been incorporated into

\* Bower's Lives of the Popes. Gregory I.

Christian worship, but speedily issued his sovereign decrees, enjoining uniformity of worship, and thus rendered these heathen rites binding upon all who were desirous of continuing in fellowship with the Romish church, or, as it was now called, the Holy Catholic church. Thus incorporated, they became a constituent element of the anti-Christian Apostasy, and have so continued from that time till the present.

The process of change from the simplicity and spirituality of primitive Christian worship to the pomp, and form, and show of the paganized Christianity of Rome was gradual, and commenced by slow and almost imperceptible steps; and it is a fact from which the Protestant churches of the present day should learn a most important lesson, that the very earliest innovation, adopted from motives of worldly policy—the very first adoption of heathen rites, in order to remove the offence of the Cross, or to conciliate those who hated the religion of “the crucified one,” because it was *a spiritual religion*—was the entering wedge which made way for that mass of Pagan rites and ceremonies, which were finally embodied in the worship of the apostate church of Rome.

Not that we would imply, that, when the earliest innovations from the simplicity of Christian worship were adopted, the actors therein understood the danger connected with these first steps in error; or that they anticipated or even imagined that



they would ever grow into such a vast and hideous system of superstition as is that of the great papal Apostasy. The germs of many of the corruptions of Popery may be dated from a very early age, and were it not that the originators of those corruptions were entirely unsuspecting of the bitterness of those apples of Sodom, which should eventually spring from the seed by them sown, it would be difficult to account for the fact, that so soon after the age of the apostles the seeds of many of these errors should have commenced to germinate.

By these admissions, however, we are not to be understood as implying that the incipient corruptions in the Christian worship of the second or the third century bore any comparison in enormity to that gross system of superstition and idolatry which was subsequently established and perpetuated in Rome, under the abused name of Christianity, and which is so truthfully and graphically described by Dr. Middleton in the following work.

No! at the epoch of Constantine's conversion,\* the Pantheon at Rome was still occupied by its ancient gods, and Christians universally abominated, as "the accursed thing," the bowing down to idols of wood or of stone. The marble Jupiters of Roman mythology had not then transferred their honors to the Saint Peters of Roman, *Christianity* (?) nor had the statues of Pagan goddesses yielded their

\* A. D. 312.

names and their honors to the Madonnas or the saints, at present adored under the figures of the same identical idols. The pretended wood of the true cross had not yet been dragged from its obscurity to be enshrined in a thousand places, as incentives to idolatry, nor had the fictitious bones of saints or of impostors been raked from their graves to be the instruments for fraud and “lying wonders,” by a corrupt and apostate priesthood.

For three centuries after the ascension of Christ, the wisest and the best of men united in condemning even the least approach towards the worship of images. “It is an injury to God,” says Justin Martyr, in the second century, “to make an image of him in base wood or stone.”\* “We Christians,” says Origen, in the third century, when writing against his infidel antagonist, “have nothing to do with images, on account of the second commandment; the first thing we teach those who come to us is, to despise idols and all images; it being the peculiar character of the Christian religion to raise our minds above images, agreeably to the law which God himself has given to mankind.”† “God ought to be worshipped,” says Augustine, in the fourth century, “without an image; images serving only to bring the Deity into contempt.”‡ The same bishop elsewhere asserts that “it would be

\* Justin's Apology, ii. page 44.

† Origen against Celsus, l. v. 7.

‡ Augustine de Civit Dei., l. vii. c. 5.

impious in a Christian to set up a corporeal image of God in a church ; and that he would be thereby guilty of the sacrilege condemned by St. Paul, of turning the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man.”\*

The testimony of these fathers is merely cited as historical evidence as to the state of opinion on this subject in their day, not as matter of *authority* ; because were their testimony *in favor* of the practice of this popish idolatry, as it is of some other early corruptions, still their authority would weigh nothing with genuine Protestants, in favor of a practice so plainly opposed, as is the worship of images, to the letter and the spirit of the Bible.

Some of the fathers, as Tertullian, Clemens Alexandrinus, and Origen, carried their opposition to all sorts of images to such an extent, as to teach that the Scriptures forbid altogether the arts of statuary and painting.† Now while it is admitted that they were mistaken in this construction of the second commandment,—for we are only forbidden to make graven images for the purpose of *bowing down* to them and *serving* them (Exodus xx. 5),—yet the fact itself, of their expressing such an opinion, is the most conclusive proof possible, that they knew nothing whatever of the image-worship which sprung

\* Augustine, de Fide, et Symb., c. vii.

† See Bower's History of the Popes, vol. ii. page 34, American edition, for several testimonies from Tertullian, Clemens, and Origen, on this point.

up a few centuries later, which was embodied and perpetuated in the apostate church of Rome, and which is so truthfully exposed and so deservedly rebuked in the work of Dr. Middleton.

A singular proof of the abhorrence in which the worship of images was still held as late as towards the close of the fourth century, is furnished by a letter written by Epiphanius of Salamis to John of Jerusalem, about that time. "Having entered," says he, "into a church in a village of Palestine, named Anablatha, I found there a veil which was suspended at the door, and painted with a representation, whether of Jesus Christ or of some saint, for I do not recollect whose image it was, but seeing that *in opposition to the authority of Scripture, there was a human image in the church of Jesus Christ*, I tore it in pieces."\*

In the fifth century the practice of ornamenting the churches with *pictures* had become very common. At the close of the sixth century and the beginning of the seventh, Gregory unwisely granted the use of *images* "as helps to the memory, or as books to instruct those who could not read," though he strictly forbade the *worship* of them "in any manner whatsoever."† Of course the distinction invented by modern popish idolaters, between sovereign or subordinate, absolute or relative, proper or improper worship—the worship of *latria*, *dulia*, or *hyper-*

\* Epiph. apud Hieron., tom. 2. Epist. 6.

† Greg. Epist.—Lib. vii. Epist. 110.

*dulia*—of course, I say, these scholastic distinctions were not then invented, and were therefore unknown to Gregory. They never would have been thought of, but for the necessity which papists found of inventing some way of warding off the charge of idolatry, so frequently and so justly alleged against them. The words of Gregory, in his letter to Serenus, bishop of Marseilles, were, “*adorari vero imagines omnibus modis devita,*” which the Roman Catholic historian, Dupin, has translated, “that he must not allow images to be worshipped *in any manner whatever.*”\*

The precedent was, however, a dangerous one ; which Gregory thus established, by permitting the *use* of images in the churches. He might have anticipated that if suffered at all, they would not long continue to be regarded merely as *books for the ignorant* ; especially when, as soon after happened in this dark age, the most ridiculous stories began to be circulated relative to the marvellous prodigies and miraculous cures effected by the presence or the contact of these wondrous blocks of wood and of stone. The result that might naturally have been anticipated, came to pass. These images became idols ; the ignorant multitude reverently kissed them, and “*bowed themselves down*” before them ; and in a very few years a system of idol-worship had sprung up equally debasing with that which was witnessed by

\* Dupin's Eccles. Hist., vol. v. page 122.

Dr. Middleton, and which prevails at the present day in Italy and other popish countries of Europe.

When this system of image-worship had become a part of the established religion of the apostate church of Rome, and was sanctioned and defended by her sovereign Pontiffs,\* the step was an easy one to the adoption of many of the images of Pagan deities, found in the heathen temples of that city, to be the representatives of real or imaginary Christian saints and martyrs ; and when this step had been taken, it is not surprising that most of the ceremonies, anciently performed in honor of these images, by the pontifices, augurs, and haruspices of Pagan Rome, should be perpetuated by the pontifices, the cardinals and the priests of nominally Christian Rome.

Some, perhaps, may be disposed to think, with Bishop Warburton, that the idolatrous ceremonies and worship of the false church of Rome, are not to be traced to any Pagan originals from which they were copied, but that they are to be ascribed rather to "one common nature \* \* \* debased by superstition, and speaking to all its tribes of individuals ;"

\* In the year 713 pope Constantine issued an edict by which he pronounced those accursed, "who deny that veneration to the holy images which is appointed by the church,"—" *Sanctis imaginibus venerationem constitutam ab ecclesia, qui negarent illam ipsam.*" The insane energy of the two immediate successors of Constantine, popes Gregory II. and Gregory III. in favor of image-worship is well known. For an account thereof, the Editor would refer the reader to his "History of Romanism," pp. 157-161.



and that, notwithstanding their exact resemblance, "the same spirit of superstition, operating in equal circumstances, made BOTH Papists and Pagans truly ORIGINALS."\*

It is true, indeed, as a learned prelate of the present day has most forcibly shown, that most of "the errors of Romanism" (and this among the rest) may be "traced to their origin in human nature;"† yet while it is admitted that the depraved nature of man, and its tendency to superstition, may account for the readiness with which the early corrupters of Christianity adopted these pagan ceremonies; yet we believe there are but few careful readers of Dr. Middleton's work who will doubt that the ceremonies themselves, such as the offering of incense, use of holy water, burning candles in the day time, votive offerings, road-gods, &c., as well as in many instances the images themselves, were copied immediately from the pagan worship of ancient Rome.

Even if there should be any who shall conclude, with Bishop Warburton, that both the idolatry of Popery, and the idolatry of Paganism are *originals*, and that the former is not therefore (as Dr. Middleton infers, and most readers will believe) a mere copy of the latter; still, they will be compelled to admit with the Bishop, who says, when referring to

\* See Bishop Warburton's *Divine Legation of Moses*, vol. ii. page 355.

† Allusion is here made to the valuable work of Dr. Whately, Archbishop of Dublin, entitled "The errors of Romanism traced to their origin in Human Nature."

our author and other able writers upon the resemblance of Paganism and Popery, that—"They have indeed shown an exact and surprising likeness in a great variety of instances."\*

As, therefore, the *facts* related by our author, and the close resemblance which he proves to exist between the two systems, are fully admitted by Bishop Warburton, and the difference of opinion between him and our author is only in respect to the *inference* Dr. Middleton draws from these facts (an inference from which, we think, few readers will dissent), this passing allusion to the criticism of the learned Bishop will be regarded as a sufficient notice thereof, without swelling the size of the volume by inserting entire the critique of the Bishop and the reply of our author.

The education, learning and tastes of Dr. Middleton pre-eminently qualified him for the task he assumed, and which he has so well performed in the following work. That task was to describe the ceremonies of the Christianized Paganism of Rome, as they fell under his own observation during a visit to that city in the year 1724, and, as the title intimates, to show the "exact conformity between Popery and Paganism," and to demonstrate that "the religion of the present Romans is derived from their heathen ancestors."

Educated at Cambridge University for the ministry of the Church of England, he was chosen in the

\* See Warburton's *Divine Legation*, *ut supra*.

year 1706, at the age of 23, a fellow of Trinity College, and a few years later, on account of his vast and varied learning, he was appointed principal librarian of the University. Perfectly familiar with the whole range of ancient classic literature, he was prepared on his visit to Rome, at the mature age of 41, at once to recall to mind the descriptions of the ceremonies of ancient Pagan worship scattered throughout the pages of the Greek and Latin historians and poets ; and thus to recognize at a glance, in the classic pictures of Homer or of Herodotus, of Virgil or of Livy, the originals of those parodies on ancient Paganism, presented in the nominally Christian worship of Rome. How well he improved these advantages, is manifest from his celebrated "Letter from Rome," which has now stood the test of upwards of a century, and is still held in the highest estimation by the whole Protestant world, as a monument of his extraordinary learning, industry, and research.

Soon after the appearance of the three first editions of the work, which followed each other in rapid succession, it was attacked by a popish writer, in the preface to a work entitled "the Catholic Christian Instructed," and in reply to this attack, Dr. Middleton wrote the "Defence of his Letter from Rome," which is printed (for the first time, we believe, in America) in connection with the present edition of his work. This defence is but little inferior in value. and not at all inferior in learning to

the original work. In the edition from which we print, viz. that of London, 1755, the defence is prefixed to the work, under the title of "a Prefatory Discourse to the Letter from Rome." We have thought it more proper to insert it *after* the original work, where it appropriately belongs in the order of time, and to entitle it, as it in reality is, "a Defence of the Letter from Rome."

Both the "Letter" of Dr. Middleton and the "Defence" thereof, were originally accompanied by a multitude of learned references and notes, in the Greek, Latin, French, and Italian languages. In many instances the very gist of the argument seemed to the present editor to depend upon the accuracy and the point of these quotations from classical and Romish authors. He has, therefore, deemed it expedient to insert the most important of these notes, omitting only such as appeared least necessary to establish the argument of Dr. Middleton. To aid the unlearned reader, he has also given a translation of the quotations in foreign languages, unless, as in many instances, a translation had already been embodied in the text. As the editor is responsible for such translations, in order to distinguish them, as well as a few additional notes, which he has appended, they are denoted by his initial [D.]

The editor has also divided the "Letter from Rome" into Chapters, and the "Defence" into Sections, with appropriate captions, and prefixed an

Analytical Index ; being satisfied, from former experience, that such an arrangement constitutes a powerful aid to the memory, and much enhances the practical value of a work intended for popular perusal ;—to be read, studied, and remembered.

The editor commends the present edition of the valuable work of Dr. Middleton to the American public, with the earnest hope that it may be owned of God as a means of arresting the progress, in this favored land, of a system of idolatrous superstition, as contrary to the Scriptures as it is insulting to reason ; and of opening the eyes of every lover of his Bible and of his country, to the true character of that anti-Christian and apostate church, which is straining every nerve to regain on this western continent, that despotic power and unbounded influence which it once exercised on the eastern.

J. DOWLING.

*Berean Parsonage,* }  
*New-York, March 1st, 1847.* }

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## DR. MIDDLETON'S PREFACE.

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THE following reflections were the subject of several Letters written by me from Rome, to my friends in England ; and as the argument of them was much upon my thoughts, and always in my view, during my stay in Italy, so there hardly passed a day, that did not afford me fresh matter and proof for the confirmation of it, till my collections grew up to the size in which they now appear. Upon a review of them at my return, I found it necessary, for the sake of method and connection, to dispose them into one continued argument, and to collect into one view, under the form of a single letter, what had been more slightly and separately touched in several.

Many writers, I know, have treated the same subject before me ; some of which I have never seen ; but those, whom I have looked into, handle it in a manner so different from what I have pursued, that I am under no apprehension of being thought a plagiarist, or to have undertaken a province already occupied. My observations are grounded on facts,



of which I have been an eye-witness myself, and which others perhaps had not the opportunity of examining personally, or considering so particularly as I have done ; and in my present representation of them I have not claimed the allowed privilege of a traveller, to be believed on my own word, but for each article charged on the Church of Rome, have generally produced such vouchers as they themselves will allow to be authentic.

Much leisure, with an infirm state of health, was the cause of my journey to Italy ; and on such an occasion, I thought it my duty, to use the opportunity given me by Providence, towards detecting and exposing, as far as I was able, the true spring and source of those impostures, which, under the name of religion, have been forged from time to time, for no other purpose than to oppress the liberty, and engross the property of mankind.

But whatever be my opinion of the general scheme of that religion, yet, out of justice to the particular possessors of it, I think myself obliged to declare, that I found much candor, humanity, and politeness in all those, whom I had the honor to converse with ; and though my character and profession were well known at Rome, yet I received particular civilities from persons of the first distinction both in the Church and the Court.

# A LETTER FROM ROME,

SHOWING THE EXACT CONFORMITY BETWEEN

## POPERY AND PAGANISM.

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### CHAPTER I.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF ROME, AND MOTIVES OF THE JOURNEY.

SIR : I am sensible, that by this time you cannot but be desirous to have some account of the entertainment that I have met with in Rome ; for as you have often heard me declare a very high opinion of the pleasure which a curious man might reasonably expect to find in it, so you will be impatient to hear how far my expectation has been answered, and my curiosity satisfied. You have observed, without doubt, from my former letters, that the pleasure of my travels seemed to grow upon me in proportion to the progress which I made on my journey, and to my approach towards Rome ; and that every place, which I had seen the last, still pleased me the most. This was certainly true in my road through Lyons, Turin, Genoa,

Florence; but is much more remarkably so with regard to Rome; which, of all the places that I have yet seen, or ever shall see, is by far the most delightful; since all those very things, which had recommended any other place to me, and which I had been admiring before, single and dispersed, in the several cities through which I passed, may be seen in Rome, as it were, in one view, and not only in greater plenty, but in greater perfection.

I have often been thinking, that this voyage to Italy might properly enough be compared to the common stages and journey of life. At our setting out through France, the pleasures that we find, like those of our youth, are of the gay fluttering kind, which grow by degrees, as we advance towards Italy, more solid, manly, and rational, but attain not their full perfection till we reach Rome, from which point we no sooner turn homewards, than they begin again gradually to decline, and though sustained for a while in some degree of vigor, through the other stages and cities of Italy, yet dwindle at last into weariness and fatigue, and a desire to be at home; where the traveller finishes his course, as the old man does his days, with the usual privilege of being tiresome to his friends, by a perpetual repetition of past adventures.

But to return to my story. Rome is certainly of all cities in the world the most entertaining to strangers; for whether we consider it in its ancient or present, its civil or ecclesiastical state; whether we admire the great perfection of arts

in the noble remains of old Rome ; or the revival of the same arts in the beautiful ornaments of modern Rome ; every one, of what genius or taste soever, will be sure to find something or other, that will deserve his attention, and engage his curiosity ; and even those who have no particular taste or regard at all for things curious, but travel merely for the sake of fashion, and to waste time, will still spend that time with more satisfaction at Rome, than any where else ; from that easy manner in which they find themselves accommodated with all the conveniences of life ; that general civility and respect to strangers ; that quiet and security, which every man of prudence is sure to find in it.

But one thing is certainly peculiar to this city ; that though travellers have generally been so copious in their descriptions of it, and there are published in all parts of Europe such voluminous collections of its curiosities, yet it is a subject never to be exhausted ; since in the infinite variety of entertainment which it affords, every judicious observer will necessarily find something or other that has either escaped the searches of others, or that will at least afford matter for more particular and curious remarks, than a common traveller is capable of making, or a general collector has time to reflect on. The learned Montfaucon, speaking of the Villa of Prince Borghese, says, “ though its antique monuments and rarities have been a hundred times described in print, that many more of them still have been overlooked and omitted, than are yet

published." And if this be true of one single collection, what an idea must we have of the immense treasure of the same kind, which the whole city is able to furnish?

As for my own journey to this place, it was not, I own, any motive of devotion, which draws so many others hither, that occasioned it. My zeal was not bent on visiting the holy thresholds of the Apostles, or kissing the feet of their successor. I knew that their ecclesiastical antiquities were mostly fabulous and legendary; supported by fictions and impostures, too gross to employ the attention of a man of sense. For should we allow that St. Peter had been at Rome, (of which many learned men, however, have doubted,) yet they had not, I knew, any authentic monuments remaining of him; any visible footsteps subsisting, to demonstrate his residence among them: and should we ask them for any evidence of this kind, they would refer us to the *impression of his face on the wall of the dungeon*, in which he was confined; or to a fountain in the bottom of it, raised miraculously by him out of the rock, in order to baptize his fellow prisoners; or to the *mark of our Saviour's feet in a stone*, on which he appeared to him, and stopped him, as he was flying out of the city from a persecution then raging; in memory of which there was a church built on the spot, called St. Mary delle Piante, or of the marks of the feet; which falling into decay was supplied by a chapel, at the expense of our Cardinal Pole. But the stone itself, more valuable,

as their writers say,\* than any of the precious ones, being a perpetual monument and proof of the Christian religion, is preserved with all due reverence in St. Sebastian's church; where I purchased a print of it, with several others of the same kind.

Or they would appeal, perhaps, to the evidence of some miracle wrought at his execution; as they do in the case of St. Paul, in a church called "At the three Fountains," the place where he was beheaded; on which occasion, it seems, "Instead of blood there issued only milk from his veins; and his head, when separated from the body, having made three jumps upon the ground, raised at each place a spring of living water, which retains still, as they would persuade us, the plain taste of milk:" of all which facts we have an account in Baronius, Mabillon, and all their gravest authors,† and may

\* Lapis vero ille dignissimus et omni pretioso lapidi antefendus, in D. Sebastiani ecclesiam translatus, ibidem, quo par est religionis cultu, in perenne Religionis Christianæ monumentum asservatur. *Aring.* l. iii. c. 21.

That stone, most honored, and to be preferred to every precious stone, was translated into the church of St. Sebastian, where it stands, with all suitable religious reverence, as a perpetual monument of the Christian religion.—[D.]

† Cum sacrum caput obtruncaretur, non tam fluentia sanguinis, quam candidissimi lactis rivuli, &c. It. In ipso autem Martyrii loco tres adhuc perexigui jugiter fontes, &c., horum primus cæteris dulcior saporem lactis præ se fert, &c. *Aring.* l. iii. c. 2. It. *vid. Baronii Annal. A. D.* 69. It. *Mabill. Iter Ital.* p. 142.

When the sacred head was cut off, not so much streams of blood, as rivulets of the whitest milk, &c. Also,—In the very place of the martyrdom, three small fountains, &c.—the first of these, sweeter than the others, presents the taste of milk, &c.—[D.]



see printed figures of them in the description of modern Rome.

It was no part of my design, to spend my time abroad, in attending to the ridiculous fictions of this kind. The chief pleasure which I proposed to myself was, to visit the genuine remains and venerable relics of pagan Rome; the authentic monuments of antiquity, that demonstrate the certainty of those histories which are the entertainment as well as the instruction of our younger years; and which, by the early prejudice of being the first knowledge that we acquire, as well as the delight which they give, in describing the lives and manners of the greatest men who ever lived, gain sometimes so much upon our riper age as to exclude too often other more useful and necessary studies. I could not help flattering myself with the joy that I should have, in viewing the very place and scene of those important events, the knowledge and explication of which have ever since been the chief employment of the learned and polite world; in treading that ground, where at every step we stumble on the ruins of some fabric described by the ancients, and cannot help setting a foot on the memorial of some celebrated action in which the great heroes of antiquity had been personally engaged. I amused myself with the thoughts of taking a turn in those very walks, where Cicero and his friends had held their philosophical disputations, or of standing on that very spot, where he had delivered some of his famous orations.

Such fancies as these, with which I often entertained myself on my road to Rome, are not, I dare say, peculiar to myself, but common to all men of reading and education; whose dreams upon a voyage to Italy, like the descriptions of the Elysian fields, represent nothing to their fancies but the pleasure of finding out and conversing with those ancient sages and heroes whose characters they have most admired. Nor indeed is this imagination much disappointed in the event; for, as Cicero observes, "Whether it be from nature, or some weakness in us, it is certain that we are much more affected with the sight of those places, where great and famous men have spent most part of their lives, than either to hear of their actions, or read their works;"\* and he was not, as he tells us, "so much pleased with Athens itself, for its stately buildings or exquisite pieces of art, as in recollecting the great men whom it had bred; in carefully visiting their sepulchres; and finding out the place where each had lived, or walked, or held his disputations."† This is what every man of curiosity will, in the like circumstances, find true in himself; and for my own part, as oft as I have been rambling about in the very rostra of old Rome, or in that temple of Concord, where Tully assembled the senate in Catiline's conspiracy, I could not help fancying myself much more sensible of the force of his eloquence; whilst the impression of the place served to

\* Cicero de Fin. v.

† Cic. de Legibus. ii, 2.

warm my imagination to a degree almost equal to that of his old audience.

As therefore my general studies had furnished me with a competent knowledge of Roman history, as well as an inclination to search more particularly into some branches of its antiquities, so I had resolved to employ myself chiefly in inquiries of this sort ; and to lose as little time as possible in taking notice of the fopperies and ridiculous ceremonies of the present religion of the place. But I soon found myself mistaken ; for the whole form and outward dress of their worship seemed so grossly idolatrous and extravagant, beyond what I had imagined, and made so strong an impression on me, that I could not help considering it with a particular regard ; especially when the very reason which I thought would have hindered me from taking any notice of it at all, was the chief cause that engaged me to pay so much attention to it : for nothing, I found, concurred so much with my original intention of conversing with the ancients, or so much helped my imagination to fancy myself wandering about in old heathen Rome, as to observe and attend to their religious worship, all whose ceremonies appeared plainly to have been copied from the rituals of primitive Paganism, as if handed down by an uninterrupted succession from the priests of old, to the priests of new Rome ; whilst each of them readily explained and called to my mind some passage of a classic author, where the same ceremony was described as transacted in the same form and

manner, and in the same place, where I now saw it executed before my eyes ; so that as oft as I was present at any religious exercise in their churches, it was more natural to fancy myself looking on at some solemn act of idolatry in old Rome, than assisting at a worship, instituted on the principles, and formed upon the plan of Christianity.

Many of our divines have, I know, with much learning, and solid reasoning, charged and effectually proved the crime of idolatry on the church of Rome ; but these controversies (in which there is still something plausible to be said on the other side, and where the charge is constantly denied, and with much subtlety evaded) are not capable of giving that conviction, which I immediately received from my senses ; the surest witnesses of fact in all cases ; and which no man can fail to be furnished with, who sees Popery, as it is exercised in Italy, in the full pomp and display of its pageantry, and practising all its arts and powers without caution or reserve. This similitude of the popish and pagan religion seemed so evident and clear, and struck my imagination so forcibly, that I soon resolved to give myself the trouble of searching to the bottom, and to explain and demonstrate the certainty of it, by comparing together the principal and most obvious parts of each worship ; which, as it was my first employment after I came to Rome, shall be the subject of my first letter. Reserving therefore to my next, the account that I design to give you

of the antiquities and other curiosities of the place, I shall find matter enough for this time to tire both you and myself, in showing the source and origin of the popish ceremonies, and the exact conformity of them with those of their pagan ancestors.

## CHAPTER II.

### INCENSE, HOLY WATER, AND LIGHTED CANDLES.

THE very first thing that a stranger must necessarily take notice of, as soon as he enters their churches, is the use of incense or perfumes in their religious offices. The first step which he takes within the door, will be sure to make him sensible of it, by the offence that he will immediately receive from the smell, as well as smoke of this incense, with which the whole church continues filled for some time after every solemn service; a custom received directly from Paganism, and which presently called to my mind the old descriptions of the heathen temples and altars, which are seldom or never mentioned by the ancients without the epithet of perfumed or incensed.\*

In some of their principal churches, where you have before you, in one view, a great num-

\* Sæpe Jovem vidi, cum jam sua mittere vellet,  
Fulmina, thure dato sustinuisse manum.—*Ovid.*

Often have I seen Jupiter, when he was about to dart his thunderbolts, upon incense being offered, to hold back his hand.—[D.]

Thuricremis cum dona imponeret Aris.—*Virg. Æn. iv. ver. 453.*

When he placed gifts on altars perfumed with incense.—[D.]



ber of altars, and all of them smoking at once with steams of incense, how natural is it to imagine one's self transported into the temple of some heathen deity, or that of the Paphian Venus described by Virgil?

— Ubi templum illi, centumque Sabæo  
Thure calent aræ, sertisque recentibus halant.—*Æn.* i. 417.

'Her hundred altars there with garlands crown'd,  
And richest incense smoking, breathe around  
Sweet odors,' &c.

Under the pagan emperors, the use of incense for any purpose of religion was thought so contrary to the obligations of Christianity, that, in their persecutions, the very method of trying and convicting a Christian was by requiring him only to throw the least grain of it into the censer or on the altar.\*

Under the Christian emperors, on the other hand, it was looked upon as a rite so peculiarly heathenish, that the very places or houses, where it could be proved to have been done, were by

\* Maximus dixit : Thure tantum Deos, Nicander, honorato. Nicander dixit : Quomodo potest homo Christianus lapides et ligna colere, Deo relicto immortali? &c.—*Vid. Act. Martyr. Nicandri, &c., apud Mabill. Iter. Ital.* T. i. Par. ii. p. 247.

Maximus said—'Only honor the gods with incense, Nicander.' But Nicander replied—'How can a Christian man forsake the eternal God, and worship wood and stone?'—*See Acts of the Martyrs, Nicander, &c., in Mabillon, Vol. ii. p. 247.—[D.]*

Adeo ut Christianos verè sacrificare crederent, ubi summis digitis paululum thuris iniecissent acerram, &c.—*Vide Durant. de Ritib.* L. i. c. 9.

So that they believed Christians to be really sacrificing (to the idols) when they threw the smallest particle of incense into the censer with the tips of their fingers.—[D.]

a law of Theodosius confiscated to the government.

In the old bass-reliefs, or pieces of sculpture, where any heathen sacrifice is represented, we never fail to observe a boy in sacred habit, which was always white, attending on the priest, with a little chest or box in his hands, in which this incense was kept for the use of the altar.\* And in the same manner still in the church of Rome, there is always a boy in surplice, waiting on the priest at the altar with the sacred utensils, and among the rest, the *Thuribulum* or vessel of incense, which the priest, with many ridiculous motions and crossings, waves several times, as it is smoking around and over the altar in different parts of the service.

The next thing that will, of course, strike one's imagination, is their *use of holy water*; for nobody ever goes in or out of a church, but is either sprinkled by the priest, who attends for that purpose on solemn days, or else serves himself with it from a vessel, usually of marble, placed just at the door, not unlike to one of our baptismal fonts. Now this ceremony is so notoriously and directly transmitted to them from Paganism, that their own writers make not the least scruple to own it. The Jesuit la Cerda, in his notes on a passage of Virgil where this practice is mentioned, says, "Hence was derived the custom of holy church, to provide purifying or

\* Da mihi Thura, puer, pingues facientia flammæ.—*Ovid*.

Give me the incense, boy, making rich flames.—[D.]

holy water at the entrance of their churches.”\* *Aquaminarium* or *Amula*, says the learned Montfaucon, was a vase of holy water, placed by the heathen at the entrance of their temples, to sprinkle themselves with.† The same vessel was by the Greeks called *Periranterion*; two of which, the one of gold, the other of silver, were given by Cræsus to the temple of Apollo at Delphi; and the custom of sprinkling themselves was so necessary a part of all their religious offices, that the method of excommunication seems to have been by prohibiting to offenders the approach and use of the holy water-pot. The very composition of this holy water was the same also among the heathen as it is now among the papists, being nothing more than a mixture of salt with common water; and the form of the sprinkling brush, called by the ancients *aspersorium* or *aspergillum*, (which is much the same with what the priests now make use of,) may be seen in bass-reliefs or ancient coins, wherever the insignia, or emblems of the pagan priesthood are described, of which it is generally one.‡

\* Spargens rore levi, &c.—*Virg. Æn.* vi. 230.

‡ Sprinkling with the light dew, &c.—[D.]

† Vid. Montfaucon. *Antiquit.* T. ii. P. i. L. iii. c. 6.

καθαραῖς δὲ δρόσοις

Ἀφνδρανάμενοι στείχετε ναοὺς. *Eurip. Ione*, v. 96.

Ascend the temples, having sprinkled yourselves with the pure drops.—*Euripides*.—[D.]

‡ Vid. Montfaucon. *Antiq.* T. ii. P. i. L. iii. c. 6.

It may be seen on a silver coin of Julius Cæsar, as well as many other emperors.—*Ant. Agostini discorso sopra le Medaglie*.

Platina, in his Lives of the Popes, and other authors, ascribe the institution of this holy water to pope Alexander the first, who is said to have lived about the year of Christ 113. But it could not be introduced so early; since, for some ages after, we find the primitive fathers speaking of it, as a custom purely heathenish, and condemning it as impious and detestable. Justin Martyr says, "That it was invented by demons. in imitation of the true baptism signified by the prophets, that their votaries might also have their pretended purifications by water;"\* and the emperor Julian, out of spite to the Christians, used to order the victuals in the markets to be sprinkled with holy water, on purpose either to starve, or force them to eat, what, by their own principles, they esteemed polluted.

Thus we see what contrary notions the primitive and Romish church have of this ceremony; the first condemns it as superstitious, abominable, and irreconcilable with Christianity; the latter adopts it as highly edifying, and applicable to the improvement of Christian piety. The one looks upon it as the contrivance of the devil, to delude mankind; the other as the security of mankind against the delusions of the devil. But what is still more ridiculous than even the ceremony itself, is to see their learned writers gravely reckoning up the several virtues and benefits derived from the use of it, both to the soul and

\* Καὶ τὸ λουτρὸν δὴ τοῦτο ἀκούσαντες οἱ Δαίμονες διὰ τοῦ προφήτου κεκηρυγμένον, ἐνήργησαν καὶ βαντίζουσιν ἑαυτοὺς εἰς τοὺς τὰ ἕρα αὐτῶν ἐπιβαίνοντας. *Just. Mart. Apol. i. p. 91. Edit. Thirlb.*

the body;\* and to crown all, producing a long roll of miracles, to attest the certainty of each virtue which they ascribe to it.† Why may we not then justly apply to the present people of Rome, what was said by the poet of its old inhabitants for the use of this very ceremony?

Ah nimium faciles, qui tristia crimina cædis  
Flumineâ tolli posse putetis aquâ!—*Ovid. Fast. ii. 45.*

“Ah, easy fools, to think that a whole flood  
Of water e’er can purge the stain of blood.”

I do not at present recollect whether the ancients went so far as to apply the use of this holy water to the purifying or blessing their horses, asses, and other cattle; or whether this be an improvement of modern Rome, which has dedicated a yearly festival peculiarly to this service, called, in their vulgar language, the benediction of horses, which is always celebrated with much solemnity in the month of January; when all the inhabitants of the city and neighbourhood send up their horses, asses, &c., to the convent of St. Anthony, near St. Mary the great, where a priest in surplice at the church door sprinkles with his brush all the animals singly, as they are presented to him, and receives from each owner a gratuity proportionable to his zeal and ability. Amongst the rest, I had my own horses

\* Durant de Ritib. L. i. c. 21. Hospinian de origine Templorum. L. ii. c. 25.

† Hujus aquæ benedictæ virtus variis miraculis illustratur, &c.—*Durant. ibid.*

The virtue of this holy water is illustrated by various miracles, &c.—[D.]

blest at the expense of about eighteen pence of our money ; as well to satisfy my own curiosity, as to humour the coachman ; who was persuaded, as the common people generally are, that some mischance would befall them within the year, if they wanted the benefit of this benediction. Mabillon, in giving an account of this function, of which he happened also to be an eye-witness, makes no other reflection upon it, than that it was new and unusual to him.\*

I have met indeed with some hints of a practice not foreign to this, among the ancients ; of sprinkling their horses with water in the circensian games : but whether this was done out of a superstitious view of inspiring any virtue, or purifying them for those races, which were esteemed sacred ; or merely to refresh them under the violence of such an exercise, is not easy to determine. But allowing the Romish priests to have taken the hint from some old custom of Paganism ; yet this however must be granted them, that they alone were capable of cultivating so coarse and barren a piece of superstition into a revenue sufficient for the maintenance of forty or fifty idle monks.

\* In Festo Sancti Antonii prope S. Mariam Majorem, ritus nobis insolitus visus est, ut quicquid equorum est in urbe ducantur cum suis phaleris ad portam ecclesiæ, ubi aqua lustrali ab uno e patribus omnes et singuli asperguntur. *Mabill. It. Ital.* p. 136.

On the feast of St. Anthony, a rite unusual to me was seen near the church of St. Mary Major. Each one of the horses in the city is led with his trappings to the door of the church, where they are all and each sprinkled with holy water by one of the monks.—[D.]



No sooner is a man advanced a little forward into their churches, and begins to look about him, but he will find his eyes and attention attracted by a number of *lamps* and *wax candles*, which are constantly burning before the shrines and images of their saints. "In all the great churches of Italy," says Mabillon,\* "they hang up lamps at every altar;" a sight which will not only surprise a stranger by the novelty of it, but will furnish him with another proof and example of the conformity of the Romish with the Pagan worship; by recalling to his memory many passages of the heathen writers, where their perpetual lamps and candles are described as continually burning before the altars and statues of their deities.†

Herodotus tells us of the Egyptians, (who first introduced the use of lights or lamps into their temples,) that they had a famous yearly festival called, from the principal ceremony of it, *the lighting up of candles*;‡ but there is scarcely a single festival at Rome which might not for the same reason be called by the same name.

\* Ad singulas ecclesiæ aras (qui ritus in omnibus Italiæ Basilicis observatur) singulæ appensæ sunt Lampades. *Mabil. It. Ital.* p. 25.

† Centum aras posuit, vigilemque sacraverat ignem. *Virg. Æn.* iv. 200.

He placed a hundred altars, and consecrated the watchful fire. *Virgil.*—[D.]

‡ Καὶ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ οὖνομα κέεται λυχνοκαίη. *Herod.* L. ii. 62. Edit. Lond.

And the name applied to the festival was *Lychnokaie* (that is, the festival of *Burning Lamps*).—[D.]

The primitive writers frequently expose the folly and absurdity of this heathenish custom ;\* “they light up candles to God,” says Lactantius, “as if he lived in the dark ; and do not they deserve to pass for madmen, who offer lamps to the author and giver of light?”

In the collections of old inscriptions, we find many instances of presents and donations from private persons, of lamps and candlesticks to the temples and altars of their gods ; a piece of zeal, which continues still the same in modern Rome, where each church abounds with lamps of massy silver, and sometimes even of gold ; the gifts of princes, and other persons of distinction ; and it is surprising to see how great a number of this kind are perpetually burning before the altars of their principal saints, or miraculous images ; as St. Anthony of Padua, or the lady of Loretto ; as well as the vast profusion of wax candles, with which their churches are illuminated on every great festival ; when the high altar, covered with gold and silver plate, brought out of their treasuries, and stuck full of wax lights disposed in beautiful figures, looks more like the rich side-board of some great prince, dressed out for a feast, than an altar to pay divine worship at.

\* Hospin. de Orig. Templor, L. ii. 22.

## CHAPTER III.

### VOTIVE GIFTS, OR OFFERINGS.

BUT a stranger will not be more surprised at the number of lamps, or wax lights burning before their altars, than at the number of offerings, or votive gifts, which are hanging all around them, in consequence of vows made in the time of danger ; and in gratitude for deliverances and cures, wrought in sickness or distress ; a practice so common among the heathen, that no one custom of antiquity is so frequently mentioned by all their writers ; and many of their original *donaria*, or votive offerings, are preserved to this day, in the cabinets of the curious, viz., images of metal, stone or clay, as well as legs, arms, and other parts of the body, which had formerly been hung up in their temples, in testimony of some divine favor or cure effected by their tutelar deity in that particular member :\* but the most common of all offerings were pictures, representing the history of the miraculous cure or

\* Vid. Montfauc. Antiquit. T. ii. Par. I. L. iv. c. 4, 5, 6.

deliverance, vouchsafed upon the vow of the donor.

Nunc, dea, nunc succurre mihi ; nam posse mederi  
Picta docet templis multa tabella tuis. *Tibul. El. i. 3.*

“ Now, goddess, help, for thou canst help bestow,  
As all these pictures round thy altars show.”

A friend of Diagoras the philosopher, called the Atheist, having found him once in a temple, as the story is told by Cicero, “ You,” says he, “ who think the gods take no notice of human affairs, do not you see here by this number of pictures, how many people, for the sake of their vows, have been saved in storms at sea, and got safe into harbour ?” “ Yes,” says Diagoras, “ I see how it is ; for those are never painted who happen to be drowned.”\*

The temples of Æsculapius were more especially rich in these offerings, which Livy says, were “ the price and pay for the cures that he had wrought for the sick :”† where they used always to hang up, and expose to common view, in tables of brass or marble, a catalogue of all the miraculous cures which he had performed for his votaries : a remarkable fragment of one of these tables is still remaining and published in Gruter’s Collections, having been found in the ruins of a temple of that god in the island of

\* Cicero Nat. Deor. L. iii. 253.

† Tum donis dives erat, quæ remediorum salutarium ægri mercedem sacraverant Deo. *Liv. L. xlv. 28.*

It (the temple) was rich in the gifts, which the sick had consecrated to the god, as a return for his health-giving remedies.—[D.]

the Tiber at Rome; upon which the learned Montfaucon makes this reflection: that "in it are either seen the wiles of the devil, to deceive the credulous; or else *the tricks of Pagan priests, suborning men to counterfeit diseases and miraculous cures.*"\*

Now this piece of superstition, had been found of old so beneficial to the priesthood, that it could not fail of being taken into the scheme of the Romish worship: where it reigns at this day in as full height and vigor, as in the ages of Pagan idolatry; and in so gross a manner as to give scandal and offence even to some of their own communion. Polydore Virgil, after having described this practice of the ancients, "in the same manner," says he, "do we now offer up in our churches little images of wax; and as oft as any part of the body is hurt, as the hand or foot, &c., we presently make a vow to God, or one of his saints, to whom upon our recovery we make an offering of that hand or foot in wax: which custom is now come to that extravagance, that we do the same thing for our cattle, which we do for ourselves, and make offerings on account of our oxen, horses, sheep; where a scrupulous man will question whether in this we imitate the religion or the superstition of our ancestors."†

The altar of St. Phillip Neri, says Baronius, "shines with votive pictures and images, the proofs of as many miracles; receiving every day the additional lustre of fresh offerings from

\* Montfauc. Antiq. T. ii. P. i. L. iv. c. 6.

† Polydore Virgil de Inv. Rer. L. v. i.

those, who have been favored with fresh benefits ;” \* amongst whom the present Pope† himself pays, as I have been told, a yearly acknowledgment, for a miraculous deliverance that he obtained by the invocation of this saint, when he had liked to have perished under the ruins of a house, overturned in an earthquake.

There is commonly so great a number of these offerings hanging up in their churches, that, instead of adding any beauty, they often give offence, by covering or obstructing the sight of something more valuable and ornamental ; which we find to have been the case likewise in the old heathen temples ; where the priests were obliged sometimes to take them down, for the obstruction which they gave to the beauty of a fine pillar or altar. For they consist chiefly, as has been said, of arms and legs, and little figures of wood or wax, but especially of pieces of board painted, and sometimes indeed fine pictures, describing the manner of the deliverance obtained by the miraculous interposition of the saint invoked : of which offerings, the blessed Virgin is so sure always to carry off the greatest share, that

\* Baronius's *Annals* i. An. 57.

This Philip Neri is a saint in high esteem in all parts of Italy, where he has many churches dedicated to him ; he was founder of the congregation of the oratory, and died about a century and a half ago : his body lies under his altar, in a fine church called Chiesa Nuova, which was founded and built for the service of his congregation ; where we see his picture by Guido, and his statue by Algardi. Cardinal Baronius, who was one of his disciples, lies buried too in the same church.

† Benedict XIV.—the reigning Pope from A. D. 1740 to 1758.—[D.]



it may be truly said of her, what Juvenal says of the goddess Isis, whose religion was at that time in the greatest vogue at Rome, that the painters get their livelihood out of her.

*Pictores quis nescit ab Iside pasci. Juvenal.*

“As once to Isis, now it may be said,  
That painters to the Virgin owe their bread.”

As oft as I have had the curiosity to look over these *donaria*, or votive offerings, hanging round the shrines of their images, and consider the several stories of each, as they are either expressed in painting, or related in writing, I have always found them to be mere copies, or verbal translations of the originals of heathenism; for the vow is often said to have been divinely inspired, or expressly commanded; and the cure and deliverance to have been wrought, either by the visible apparition, and immediate hand of the tutelar saint, or by the notice of a dream, or some other miraculous admonition from heaven. “There can be no doubt,” say their writers, “but that the images of our saints often work signal miracles, by procuring health to the infirm, and appearing to us often in dreams, to suggest something of great moment for our service.”\*

And what is all this but a revival of the old impostures, and a repetition of the same old sto-

\* Extra omnem controversiam est, Sanctorum Imagines mirifica designare miracula, ut et debilibus valetudo bona per eos concilietur, sæpeque in somniis apparentes optima quæque nobis consulant. *Durant de Ritib. L. i. c. 5.*

ries, of which the ancient inscriptions are full, with no other difference than what the Pagans ascribed to the imaginary help of their deities, the Papists as foolishly impute to the favor of their saints; as may be seen by the multitudes of instances which all books of antiquities will furnish; and whether the reflection of father Montfaucon on the Pagan priests, mentioned above, be not in the very same case, as justly applicable to the Romish priests, I must leave to the judgment of my reader.

But the gifts and offerings of the kind, that I have been speaking of, are the fruits only of vulgar zeal, and the presents of inferior people; whilst princes and great persons, as it used to be of old, frequently make offerings of large vessels, lamps, and even statues of massy silver or gold; with diamonds, and all sorts of precious stones of incredible value; so that *the church of Loretto* is now become a proverb for its riches of this sort, just as Apollo's temple at Delphi was with the ancients on the same account.

'Οὐδ' ὅσα λαῖνος οὐδὲς ἀφήτορος ἐντὸς ἔεργει  
Φοῖβον Ἀπόλλωνος. *Homer Il. ι. 404.*

"Nor all the wealth Apollo's temple holds  
Can purchase one day's life," &c.

In the famed treasury of this holy house, one part consists, as it did likewise among the heathens, of a wardrobe. For the very idols, as Tertullian observes, used to be dressed out in curious robes, of the choicest stuffs and fashion.

While they were showing us therefore the great variety of rich habits with which that treasury abounds; some covered with precious stones, others more curiously embroidered by such a queen, or princess, for the use of the miraculous image; I could not help recollecting the picture which old Homer draws of queen Hecuba of Troy, prostrating herself before the miraculous image of Pallas, with a present of the richest and best wrought gown that she was mistress of.

Τῶν ἐν δειραμέῃ Ἑκάβῃ φέρε δῶρον Ἀθήνῃ,  
 Ὅς κάλλιστος ἔην ποικίλμασιν ἡδὲ μέγιστος;  
 Ἀστὴρ δ' ὧς ἀπέλαμπε, &c. *Homer Il. ζ. 293.*

"A gown she chose, the best and noblest far,  
 Sparkling with rich embroidery, like a star," &c.

The mention of Loretto puts me in mind of the surprise that I was in, at the first sight of the holy image; for its face is *as black as a negro's*; so that one would take it rather for the representation of a Proserpine, or infernal deity, than what they impiously style it, of the queen of heaven. But I soon recollected that this very circumstance of its complexion, made it but resemble the more exactly the old idols of Paganism, which, in sacred as well as profane writers, are described to be black with the perpetual smoke of lamps and incense.\*

\* Arnob. L. vi. Baruch vi. 19, 21.

"They light their candles, &c.—Their faces are blacked through the smoke that cometh out of the temple."

## CHAPTER IV.

### WORSHIP OF IMAGES.

WHEN a man is once engaged in reflections of this kind, imagining himself in some heathen temple, and expecting, as it were, some sacrifice or other piece of Paganism to ensue, he will not be long in suspense, before he sees the finishing act and last scene of genuine idolatry, in crowds of bigot votaries, prostrating themselves before some image of wood or stone, and paying divine honors to an idol of their own erecting. Should they squabble with us here about the meaning of the word idol, St. Jerom has determined it to the very case in question, telling us, that "by idols are to be understood the images of the dead :"\* and the worshippers of such images are used always in the style of the fathers, as terms synonymous and equivalent to heathens or Pagans.†

\* *Idola intelligimus Imagines mortuorum. Hier. Com. in Isa. c. xxxvii.*

† *Innumeri sunt in Græcia exterisque nationibus, qui se in discipulatum Christi tradiderunt, non sine ingenti odio eorum qui simulacra venerantur. Pamphili Apol. pro Orig. vid. Hieron. Op. tom. v. p. 233. Ed. Par.*

There are many in Greece, and foreign nations, who give themselves up in discipleship to Christ, not without great odium on the part of those who venerate (or worship) images.--[D.]

As to the practice itself, it was condemned by many of the wisest heathens, and for several ages, even in Pagan Rome, was thought impious and detestable ; for Numa, we find, prohibited it to the old Romans, nor would suffer any images in their temples ; which constitution they observed religiously, says Plutarch, for the first hundred and seventy years of the city. But as image worship was thought abominable even by some Pagan princes, so by some of the Christian emperors it was forbidden on pain of death : not because these images were the representations of demons, or false gods, but because they were vain senseless idols, the work of men's hands, and for that reason unworthy of any honor : and all the instances and overt acts of such worship described, condemned by them, are exactly the same with what the papists practice at this day, viz., lighting up candles ; burning incense ; hanging up garlands, &c., as may be seen in the law of Theodosius before mentioned ; which confiscates that house or land, where any such act of Gentile superstition had been committed. These princes, who were influenced, we may suppose, in their constitutions of this sort, by the advice of their bishops, did not think Paganism abolished till the adoration of images was utterly extirpated ; which was reckoned always the principal of those Gentile rites, that, agreeably to the sense of the purest ages of Christianity, are never mentioned in the imperial laws, without the epithets of profane, damnable, impious, &c.

What opinion then can we have of the present practice of the church of Rome, but that by a change only of name, they have found means to retain the thing; and by substituting their saints in the place of the old demigods, have but set up idols of their own, instead of those of their forefathers? In which it is hard to say, whether their assurance, or their address is more to be admired, who have the face to make that the principal part of Christian worship, which the first Christians looked upon as the most criminal part even of Paganism, and have found means to extract gain and great revenues out of a practice, which, in primitive times, would have cost a man both life and estate.

But our notion of the idolatry of modern Rome will be much heightened still and confirmed, as oft as we follow them into those temples, and to those very altars, which were built originally by their heathen ancestors, the old Romans, to the honor of their pagan deities; where we shall hardly see any other alteration, than the shrine of some old hero filled by the meaner statue of some modern saint. Nay, they have not always, as I am well informed, given themselves the trouble of making even this change, but have been content sometimes to take up with the old image, just as they found it, after baptizing it only, as it were, or consecrating it anew, by the imposition of a Christian name. This their antiquaries do not scruple to put strangers in mind of, in showing their churches; and it was, I think, in that of St. Agnes, where they showed



me an antique statue of a young Bacchus, which, with a new name, and some little change of drapery, stands now worshipped under the title of a female saint.

Tully reproaches Clodius, for having publicly dedicated the statue of a common strumpet, under the name and title of the goddess Liberty ; a practice still frequent with the present Romans, who have scarce a fine image or picture of a female saint, which is not said to have been designed originally by the sculptor or painter for the representation of his own mistress ; and “who dares,” may we say, ironically, with the old Roman, to “violate such a goddess as this ; the statue of a whore ?”\*

The noblest heathen temple now remaining in the world, is *the Pantheon* or rotunda, which, as the inscription† over the portico informs us, having been impiously dedicated of old, by Agrippa, to Jove and all the gods, was piously reconsecrated by pope Boniface the fourth, to the blessed Virgin and all the saints. With this single alteration, it serves as exactly for all the

\* Hanc Deam quisquam violare audeat, imaginem meretricis ? *Cic. pro Dom.* 43.

#### † PANTHEON, &c.

AB AGRIPPA AUGUSTI GENERO  
IMPIE JOVI, CETERISQUE MENDACIBUS DIIS  
A BONIFACIO IIII. PONTIFICE  
DEIPARÆ ET S. S. CHRISTI MARTYRIBUS PIE  
DICATUM,  
&c.

*Translation.*—THE PANTHEON, &c.—By Agrippa, the son-in-law of Augustus, impiously dedicated to Jove, and other false gods. By pope Boniface IV. piously dedicated to the mother of God, and to the holy saints and martyrs of Christ, &c.—[D.]

purposes of the Popish, as it did for the Pagan worship, for which it was built. For as in the old temple, every one might find the god of his country, and address himself to that deity whose religion he was most devoted to; so it is the same thing now; every one chooses the patron whom he likes best; and one may see here different services going on at the same time, at different altars, with distinct congregations around them, just as the inclinations of the people lead them to the worship of this or that particular saint.

And what better title can the new demigods show to the adoration now paid to them, than the old ones, whose shrines they have usurped? Or how comes it to be less criminal to worship images, erected by the Pope, than those which Agrippa, or that which Nebuchadnezzar set up? If there be any real difference, most people, I dare say, will be apt to determine in favor of the old possessors; for those heroes of antiquity were raised up into gods, and received divine honors, for some signal benefits, of which they had been the authors to mankind; as the invention of arts and sciences; or of something highly useful and necessary to life:\* whereas of the Romish saints, it is certain that many of them were never heard of, but in their own legends or fabulous histories; and many more, instead

\* *Imitantem Herculem illum, quem hominum fama, beneficiorum memor, in concilium cœlestium collocavit. Cicero Off. iii. 299.*

Imitating that Hercules whom fame, in memory of his benefits hath placed in the council of the gods.—[D.]

of any services done to mankind, owe all the honors now paid to them, to their vices, or their errors; whose merit, like that of Demetrius in the Acts,\* was their skill of raising rebellions in defence of an idol, and throwing kingdoms into convulsions, for the sake of some gainful imposture.

And as it is in the Pantheon, it is just the same in all the other heathen temples, that still remain in Rome; they have only pulled down one idol to set up another; and changed rather *the name*, than *the object* of their worship. Thus the little temple of *Vesta*, near the Tiber, mentioned by Horace, is now possessed by the *Madonna* of the Sun; that of *Fortuna Virilis*, by *Mary* the Egyptian; that of *Saturn*, (where the public treasure was anciently kept,) by *St. Adrian*; that of *Romulus and Remus* in the Via Sacra, by two other brothers, *Cosmas and Damianus*; that of Antonine the godly, by Laurence the saint; but for my part, I should sooner be tempted to prostrate myself before the statue of a Romulus or an Antonine, than that of Laurence or a Damian; and give divine honors rather, with Pagan Rome, to the founders of empires, than with Popish Rome, to the founders of monasteries.

At the foot of Mount Palatine, in the way between the forum of Circus Maximus, on the very spot where Romulus was believed to have been suckled by the wolf, there stands another little round temple, dedicated to him in the early times

\* Acts xix. 23.

of the republic, into which, for the present elevation of the soil without, we now descend by a great number of steps. It is mentioned by Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who says, that in his time there stood in it a brazen statue of antique work, of the wolf giving suck to the infant brothers;\* which is thought by many to be the same which is still preserved and shown in the capitol; though I take this rather, which now remains, to have been another of the same kind, that stood originally in the capitol, and is mentioned by Cicero to have been there struck with lightning:† of which it retains to this day, the evident marks in one of its hinder legs. It is, however, to one or the other of these celebrated statues, that Virgil, as Servius assures us, alludes in that elegant description :

——— Geminos huic ubera circum  
Ludere pendentes pueros et lambere matrem  
Impavidos : Illam tereti cervice reflexam  
Mulcere alternos, et fingere corpora linguâ.  
*Virg. Æn. viii. 631.*

“The martial twins beneath their mother lay,  
And hanging on her dugs, with wanton play,  
Securely sucked ; whilst she reclines her head  
To lick their tender limbs, and form them as they fed.”

But to return to my story, from the tradition of the wonderful escape which Romulus had in this very place, when exposed in his infancy to perish in the Tiber ; as soon as he came to be a god, he was looked upon as singularly propi-

\* Dion. Hal. L. i. 64. Edit. Hudson.

† Cicero Orat. in Catil. iii. 4.

tious to the health and safety of young children : from which notion it became a practice for nurses and mothers, to present their sickly infants before his shrine in this little temple, in confidence of a cure or relief by his favor. Now when this temple was converted afterwards into a church, lest any piece of superstition should be lost, or the people think themselves sufferers by the change, in losing the benefit of such a protection for their children ; care was taken to find out in the place of the heathen god a Christian saint, who had been exposed too in his infancy, and found by chance like Romulus ; and for the same reason, might be presumed to be just as fond of children as their old deity had been.

Thus the worship paid to *Romulus* being now transferred to *Theodorus*, the old superstition still subsists, and the custom of presenting children at this shrine continues to this day without intermission ; of which I myself have been a witness, having seen, as oft as I looked into this church, ten or a dozen women decently dressed, each with a child in her lap, sitting with silent reverence before the altar of the saint, in expectation of his miraculous influence on the health of the infant.

In consecrating these heathen temples to the Popish worship, that the change might be the less offensive, and the old superstition as little shocked as possible, they generally observed some resemblance of quality and character in the saint whom they substituted to the old deity.

“If, in converting the profane worship of the Gentiles,” says the describer of modern Rome, “to the pure and sacred worship of the church, the faithful use to follow some use and proportion, they have certainly hit upon it here, in dedicating to the Madonna, or holy Virgin, the temple formerly sacred to the Bona Dea, or good goddess.”\* But they have more frequently on these occasions had regard rather to a similitude of name between the old and new idol. Thus in a place formerly sacred to *Apollon*, there now stands the church of *Apollinaris*; built there, as they tell us, “that the profane name of that deity might be converted into the glorious name of this martyr:”† and where there anciently stood a temple of Mars, they have erected a church to Martina, with this inscription:

MARTYRII GESTANS VIRGO MARTINA CORONAM,  
EJECTO HINC MARTIS NUMINE, TEMPLA TENET.

“Mars hence expelled; Martina, martyr’d maid,  
Claims now the worship, which to him was paid.”

In another place, I have taken notice of an altar erected to *St. Baccho*; and in their stories of their saints, have observed the names of *Quirinus*, *Romula* and *Redempta*, *Concordia*, *Nympha*, *Mercurius*; which, though they may, for

\* Si nel revoltare il profano culto de Gentili nel sacro e vero, osservarono i fedeli qualche proportion, qui la ritrovarono assai conveniente nel dedicare à Maria Vergine un Tempio, ch’era della bona dea. *Rom. Mod. Gior.* ii. *Rion. di Ripa* x.

† La Chiesa di S. Apollinari fu fabbricata in questo luogo d’ Christiani; affinche il profano nome d’ Apolline fusse convertito nel santo nome di questo glorioso Martire. *Ibid. Gio.* iii. 21.



any thing that I know, have been the genuine names of Christian martyrs, yet cannot but give occasion to suspect, that some of them at least have been formed out of a corruption of the old names; and that the adding of a modern termination, or Italianizing the old name of a deity, has given existence to some of their present saints.

Thus the corruption of the word *Soracte* (the old name of a mountain mentioned by Horace\* in sight of Rome) has, according to Mr. Addison, added one saint to the Roman calendar; being now softened,† because it begins with an S, into *St. Oraste*; in whose honor a monastery is founded on the place: a change very natural, if we consider that the title of saint is never written by the Italians at length, but expressed commonly by the single letter S., as *S. Oracte*: and thus this holy mountain stands now under the protection of a patron, whose being and power is just as imaginary, as that of its old guardian Apollo:

Sancti custos Soractis Apollo. *Virg. Æn. ix.*

“Apollo the guardian of sacred Soracte.”

No suspicion of this kind will appear extravagant to those who are at all acquainted with the history of Popery; which abounds with instances of the grossest forgeries both of saints and relics, which, to the scandal of many even

\* Hor. Carm. L. i. 9.

† Addison's Travels from Pesaro, &c. to Rome.



among themselves,\* have been imposed for genuine on the poor ignorant people. It is certain, that in the earlier ages of Christianity, the Christians often made free with the sepulchral stones of heathen monuments, which being ready cut to their own hands, they converted to their own use; and turning downwards the side on which the old epitaph was engraved, used either to inscribe a new one on the other side, or leave it perhaps without any inscription at all, as they are often found in the catacombs of Rome.† Now this one custom has frequently been the occasion of ascribing martyrdom and saintship to persons and names of mere Pagans.

Mabillon gives a remarkable instance of it in an old stone, found on the grave of a Christian, with this inscription :

D. M.  
IVLIA EVODIA  
FILIA FECIT  
MATRI.‡

And because, in the same grave, there was found likewise a glass vial, or lachrymatory vessel, tinged with a reddish color, which they call blood, and look upon as a certain proof of martyrdom, this *Julia Evodia*, though undoubtedly a heathen, was presently adopted both for saint and martyr, on the authority of an inscription, that appears evidently to have been one of those

\* Mabill. Iter. Ital. p. 225.

† Aringhus Rom. Subt. L. iii. c. 22.

‡ *Translation*.—D. M. (*Diis Manibus*). To the Manes. Julia Evodia, the daughter, hath erected this to her mother.—[D.]

above mentioned, and borrowed from a heathen sepulchre. But whatever the party there buried might have been, whether heathen or Christian, it is certain, however, that it could not be Evodia herself, but her mother only, whose name is not there signified.

The same author mentions some original papers, which he found in the Barbarine library, giving a pleasant account of a negotiation between the Spaniards and pope Urban the eighth, in relation to this very subject.\* The Spaniards, it seems, have a saint, held in great reverence in some parts of Spain, called *Viar*; for the farther encouragement of whose worship they solicited the Pope to grant some special indulgences to his altars; and upon the Pope's desiring to be better acquainted first with his character, and the proofs which they had of his saintship, they produced a stone with these antique letters, S. VIAR., which the antiquaries readily saw to be a small fragment of some old Roman inscription in memory of one who had been *Præfectus VIARum*, or overseer of the highways.

But we have in England an instance still more ridiculous, of a fictitious saintship, in the case of a certain saint called *Amphibolus*; who,

\* Alterum notatu dignum, quod Urbanus ab Hispanis quibusdam interpellatus de concedendis indulgentiis ob cultum Sancti, cui nomen VIAR, &c. allatus est lapis in quo hæ literæ reliquæ erant S. VIAR, &c. *Vid. Mabill. Iter. Ital. p. 145.*

Another thing worthy of mention is that pope Urban, being applied to by certain persons from Spain concerning granting indulgences for the worship of a saint, named VIAR, &c., the stone was brought, in which these letters remained, S. VIAR, &c.—*Mabillon.*—[D.]

according to our monkish historians, was bishop of the Isle of Man, and fellow martyr and disciple of St. Alban: yet the learned bishop Usher has given good reasons to convince us, that he owes the honor of his saintship to a mistaken passage in the old acts or legends of St. Alban:\* where the Amphibolus mentioned, and since revered as a saint and martyr, was nothing more than the cloak, which Alban happened to have at the time of his execution; being a word derived from the Greek, and signifying a rough shaggy cloak, which ecclesiastical persons usually wore in that age.

They pretend to show us here at Rome, two original *impressions of our Saviour's face*, on two different handkerchiefs; the one sent a present by himself to Agbarus prince of Edessa, who by letter had desired a picture of him; the other, given by him at the time of his execution, to a saint, or holy woman, named Veronica, upon a handkerchief which she had lent him to wipe his face on that occasion: both which handkerchiefs are still preserved, as they affirm,† and now kept with the utmost reverence; the first in St. Silvester's church; the second in St. Peter's; where, in honor of this sacred relic, there is a fine altar built by pope Urban the

\* Usser. de Britan. Eccles. primord. c. xiv. p. 539.

† Vid. Aringh. Rom. Subterranean. Tom. ii. p. 453.

There is a prayer in their books of offices, ordered by the rubric to be addressed to this sacred and miraculous picture, in the following terms—Conduct us, O thou blessed figure, to our proper home, where we may behold the pure face of Christ. See *Conform. of Anc. and Mod. Ceremonies*, p. 158.

eighth, with the statue of Veronica herself, with the following inscription :

SALVATORIS IMAGINEM VERONICÆ  
SVDARIO EXCEPTAM  
VT LOCI MAIESTAS DECENTER  
CVSTODIRET URBANVS VIII.  
PONT. MAX.  
MARMOREVM SIGNVM  
ET ALTARE ADDIDIT CONDITORIVM  
EXTRVXIT ET ORNAVIT.\*

But notwithstanding the authority of this Pope, and his inscription, this VERONICA, as one of their best authors has shown,† like Amphibolus, before mentioned, was not any real person, but the name given to the picture itself by the old writers who mention it; being formed by blundering and confounding the words VERA ICON, or true image, the title inscribed perhaps, or given originally to the handkerchief by the first contrivers of the imposture.

These stories however, as fabulous and childish as they appear to men of sense, are yet urged by grave authors in defence of their image worship, as certain proofs of its divine origin, and sufficient to confound all the impious opposers of it.‡

\* *Translation*.—Pope Urban VIII., in order that the sanctity of the spot might suitably preserve the picture of the Saviour, received on the handkerchief of Veronica, hath erected and adorned this marble statue, and added the altar as a repository thereof.—[D.]

† Mabill. *Iter. Ital.* p. 88.

‡ Aringhus *Rom. Subt. T. ii. L. v. c. 4*, and *Rom. Mod. Gior. i. Rion. di Bor.*

I shall add nothing more on this article, than that whatever worship was paid by the ancients to their heroes or inferior deities, the Romanists now pay the same to their saints and martyrs; as their own inscriptions plainly declare; which, like those mentioned above of St. Martina, and the Pantheon, generally signify that the honors which of old had been impiously given in that place to the false god, are now piously and rightly transferred to the Christian saint: or, as one of their celebrated poets expresses himself in regard to St. George:

Ut Martem Latii, sic nos Te, Dive Georgi,  
Nunc colimus, &c. *Mantuan.*

“As Mars, our fathers once adored, so now  
To thee, O George, we humbly prostrate bow.”

And every where through Italy, one sees their sacred inscriptions speaking the pure language of Paganism, and ascribing the same powers, characters and attributes, to their saints, which had formerly been ascribed to the heathen gods, as the few here exhibited will evince.

*Popish Inscription. (1)*

MARIA ET FRANCISCE  
TVTELARES MEI.\*

*Pagan Inscription. (1)*

MERCVRIO ET MINERVAE  
DIIS TVTELARIB.†

\* *Translation of Popish Inscription.*—O Mary and Francis, my tutelar saints.—[D.]

† *Pagan Inscription.*—To Mercury and Minerva, my tutelar gods.—[D.]

*Popish Inscription. (2)*  
 DIVO EVSTORGIO  
 QVI HVIC TEMPLO  
 PRAESIDET.\*

*Pagan Inscription. (2)*  
 DII QVI HVIC TEMPLO  
 PRAESIDENT.†

*Popish Inscription. (3)*  
 DIVIS  
 PRAESTITIBVS IVVANTIBVS  
 GEORGIO STEPHANOQVE  
 CVM DEO OPT. MAX.‡

*Pagan Inscription. (3)*  
 DIIS.  
 DEABVS.  
 QVE. CVM  
 IOVE.§

Boldonius censures the author of the last inscription, for the absurdity of putting the saints before God himself; and imitating too closely the ancient inscription, which I have set against it, where the same impropriety is committed in regard to Jupiter.||

\* *Translation of Popish Inscription.*—To St. Eustorgius, who presides over this temple.—[D.]

† *Pagan Inscription.*—The gods who preside over this temple.—[D.]

‡ *Popish Inscription.*—To the guardian presiding saints. George and Stephen, with the Supreme God.—[D.]

§ *Pagan Inscription.*—To the gods and goddesses, with Jupiter.—[D.]

|| It has been thought sufficient to insert in the text the above six, out of the eleven inscriptions given by Dr. Middleton, with translations of them in notes, as instances of the striking parallelism that exists between these Popish and Pagan inscriptions.—[D.]

As to that celebrated act of Popish idolatry, *the adoration of the host*, I must confess that I cannot find the least resemblance of it in any part of the Pagan worship; and as often as I have been standing by at mass, and seen the whole congregation prostrate on the ground, in the humblest posture of adoring, at the elevation of this consecrated piece of bread, I could not help reflecting on a passage of Tully, where, speaking of the absurdity of the heathen in the choice of their gods: "But was any man," says he, "ever so mad, as to take that which he feeds upon, for a god?"\* This was an extravagance reserved for Popery alone; and what an old Roman could not but think too gross even for Egyptian idolatry to swallow, is now become the principal part of worship, and the distinguishing article of faith, in the creed of modern Rome.

\* Sed ecquem tam amentem esse putas, qui illud, quo vescatur, Deum credat esse? *Cic de Nat. Deor.* iii.



## CHAPTER V.

### ROAD GODS AND SAINTS.

BUT their temples are not the only places where we see the proofs and overt acts of their superstition. The whole face of the country has the visible characters of Paganism upon it; and wherever we look about us, we cannot but find, as St. Paul did in Athens,\* clear evidence of its being possessed by a superstitious and idolatrous people.

The old Romans, we know, had their gods, who presided peculiarly over the roads, streets and highways, called *Viales*, *Semitaes*, *Compitales*; whose little temples or altars decked with flowers, or whose statues at least, coarsely carved of wood or stone, were placed at convenient distances in the public ways, for the benefit of travellers, who used to step aside to pay their devotions to these rural shrines, and beg a prosperous journey and safety in their travels.† Now this

\* Acts xvii 17.

† *Invoco vos, Lares viales, ut me bene juvetis. Plaut.*

I invoke you, O ye road-gods, that ye render me good assistance.—[D.]

custom prevails still so generally in all Popish countries, but especially in Italy, that one can see no other difference between the old and present superstition, than that of changing the name of the deity, and christening as it were the old Hecate in triviis, by the new name of Maria in trivio; by which title, I have observed one of their churches dedicated in this city: and as the heathens used to paint over the ordinary statues of their gods, with red or some such gay color, so I have oft observed the coarse images of these saints so daubed over with a gaudy red, as to resemble exactly the description of the god Pan in Virgil:

Sanguineis ebuli baccis minioque rubentum.\* *Ecl.* x.

In passing along the road, it is common to see travellers on their knees before these rustic altars; which none ever presume to approach without some act of reverence; and those who are most in haste, or at a distance, are sure to pull off their hats at least, in token of respect: and I took notice, that our postillions used to look back upon us, to see how we behaved on such occasions, and seemed surprised at our passing so negligently before places esteemed so sacred.

But besides these images and altars, there are frequently erected on the road huge *wooden crosses*, dressed out with flowers, and hung round with the trifling offerings of the country

\* "Stained with the purple berries of the dwarf elder, and with vermilion."—[D.]

people; which always put me in mind of the superstitious veneration, which the heathens used to pay to some old trunks of trees or posts, set up in the highways, which they held sacred, or of that venerable oak in Ovid, covered with garlands and votive offerings:

Stabat in his ingens annoso robore quercus;  
Una nemus: Vittæ mediam, memoresque tabellæ  
Sertaque cingebant, voti argumenta potentis. *Met.* viii.

“Rev’rend with age, a stately oak there stood,  
Its branches widely stretched, itself a wood,  
With ribbands, garlands, pictures cover’d o’er,  
The fruits of pious vows from rich and poor.”

This description of the Pagan oak puts me in mind of a story that I have met with here, of a Popish oak very like it, viz., how a certain person, devoted to the worship of the Virgin, hung up a picture of her in an oak that he had in his vineyard, which grew so famous for its miracles, that the oak soon became covered with votive offerings, and rich presents from different countries, so as to furnish a fund at last for the building of a great church to the miraculous picture; which now stands dedicated in this city, under the title of St. Mary of the Oak.

But what gave me still the greater notion of the superstition of these countries, was to see those little oratories, or rural shrines, sometimes placed under the cover of a tree or grove; agreeably to the descriptions of the old idolatry, in the sacred as well as profane writers; or more generally raised on some eminence, or, in the phrase of Scripture, on high places; the constant

scene of idolatrous worship in all ages ; it being an universal opinion among the heathens, that the gods in a peculiar manner loved to reside on eminences or tops of mountains : which Pagan notion prevails still so generally with the Papists, that there is hardly a rock or precipice, how dreadful or difficult soever of access, that has not an oratory, or altar, or crucifix at least, planted on the top of it.

Among the rugged mountains of the Alps in Savoy, very near to a little town called Modana, there stands on the top of a rock, a chapel, with a *miraculous image* of our lady, which is visited with great devotion by the people, and sometimes, we were told, by the king himself ; being famous, it seems, for a miracle of a singular kind, viz., the restoring of dead-born children to life ; but so far only, as to make them capable of baptism, after which they again expire : and our landlord assured me, that there was daily proof of the truth of this miracle, in children brought from all quarters to be presented before this shrine ; who never failed to show manifest tokens of life, by stretching out their arms, or opening their eyes, or even sometimes making water whilst they were held by the priest in the presence of the image. All which appeared so ridiculous to a French gentleman, who was with me at the place, but had not heard the story from our landlord, that he looked upon it as a banter or fiction of my own, till I brought him to my author, who with his wife, as well as our Voiturins, very seriously testified the truth of it ;

and added farther, that when the French army passed that way in the last war, they were so impious, as to throw down this sacred image to the bottom of a vast precipice hard by it, which, though of wood only, was found below entire and unhurt by the fall, and so replaced in its shrine, with greater honor than ever, by the attestation of this new miracle.

On the top of Mount Senis, the highest mountain of the Alps, in the same passage of Savoy, covered with perpetual snow, they have another chapel, in which they perform divine service once a year, in the month of August; and sometimes, as our guides informed us, to the destruction of the whole congregation, by the accident of a sudden tempest in a place so elevated and exposed. And this surely comes up to the description of that worship which the Jews were commanded to extirpate from the face of the earth: "Ye shall utterly destroy the places wherein the nations served their gods, upon the high mountains and upon the hills, and under every green tree: and ye shall overthrow their altars, break their pillars, burn their groves, and hew down the graven images of their gods."\*

When we enter their towns, the case is still the same, as it was in the country; we find every where the same marks of idolatry, and the same reasons to make us fancy that we are still treading Pagan ground; whilst at every corner we see images and altars, with lamps or candles burning before them; exactly answering to the

\* Deut. xii. 2, 3.

descriptions of the ancient writers ; and to what Tertullian reproaches the heathens with, that their streets, their markets, their baths, were not without an idol.\*

\*Tertul. De Spectac. c. viii.

## CHAPTER VI.

### RELIGIOUS PROCESSIONS.

BUT above all, in the pomp and solemnity of their holy days, and especially their religious processions, we see the genuine remains of heathenism, and proof enough to convince us, that this is still the same Rome, which old Numa first tamed and civilized by the arts of religion: who, as Plutarch says, "by the institution of supplications and processions to the gods, which inspire reverence, whilst they give pleasure to the spectators, and by pretended miracles and divine apparitions, reduced the fierce spirits of his subjects under the power of superstition."\*

The descriptions of the religious pomps and processions of the heathens come so near to what we see on every festival of the Virgin or other Romish saint, that one can hardly help thinking these Popish ones to be still regulated by the old ceremonial of Pagan Rome. At these solemnities "the chief magistrate used frequently to assist in robes of ceremony; attended by the

\* Plutarch in Numa.



priests in surplices, with wax candles in their hands, carrying upon a pageant or thensa the images of their gods, dressed out in their best clothes; these were usually followed by the principal youth of the place, in white linen vestments or surplices, singing hymns in honor of the god whose festival they were celebrating, accompanied by crowds of all sorts that were initiated in the same religion, all with flambeaux or wax candles in their hands.”\* This is the account which Apuleius and other authors give us of a Pagan procession; and I may appeal to all who have been abroad, whether it might not pass quite as well for the description of a Popish one.

Monsieur Tournefort, in his travels through Greece, reflects upon the Greek church for having retained and taken into their present worship many of the old rites of heathenism, and particularly that of carrying and dancing about the images of the saints, in their processions, to singing and music.† The reflection is full as applicable to his own, as it is to the Greek church; and the practice itself so far from giving scandal in Italy, that the learned publisher of the Florentine inscriptions takes occasion to show the

\* *Antistites sacrorum candido linteamine—ad usque vestigia strictim injecti. Deum proferebant insignes exuvias, quorum primus lucernam præmicantem claro porrigebat lumine. &c. Eas amœnus lectissimæ juventutis, veste niveâ prænitens sequebatur chorus, carmen venustum iterantes. Magnus præterea sexûs utriusque numerus, lucernis, tædis, cereis, &c. Apul. ibid. Vid. Pausan. ii. 7.*

† Tournefort, Lit. iii. 44.

conformity between them and the heathens, from this very instance of carrying about the pictures of their saints, as the Pagans did those of their gods, in their sacred processions.\*

In one of these processions, made lately to St. Peter's in the time of Lent, I saw that ridiculous penance of the flagellantes, or *self-whippers*, who march with whips in their hands, and lash themselves as they go along, on the bare back, till it is all covered with blood; in the same manner as the fanatical priests of Bellona or the Syrian goddess, as well as the votaries of Isis, used to slash and cut themselves of old, in order to please the goddess, by the sacrifice of their own blood: which mad piece of discipline we find frequently mentioned, and as oft ridiculed by the ancient writers.

But they have another exercise of the same kind, and in the same season of Lent, which, under the notion of penance, is still a more absurd mockery of all religion: when on a certain day, appointed annually for this discipline, men of all conditions assemble themselves towards the evening, in one of the churches of the city; where whips or lashes made of cords are provided, and distributed to every person present; and after they are all served, and a short office of devotion performed; the candles being put out, upon the warning of a little bell, the whole company begin presently to strip, and try the force of these whips on their own backs, for the space of near an hour: during all which time,

\* Inscript. Antig. Flor. p. 377.

the church becomes, as it were, the proper image of hell : where nothing is heard but the noise of lashes and chains, mixed with the groans of these self-tormentors ; till satiated with their exercise, they are content to put on their clothes, and the candles being lighted again upon the tinkling of a second bell, they all appear in their proper dress.

Seneca, alluding to the very same effects of fanaticism in Pagan Rome, says : " So great is the force of it on disordered minds, that they try to appease the gods by such methods, as an enraged man would hardly take to revenge himself. But, if there be any gods who desire to be worshipped after this manner, they do not deserve to be worshipped at all : since the very worst of tyrants, though they have sometimes torn a tortured people's limbs, yet have never commanded men to torture themselves."\*

But there is no occasion to imagine, that all the blood, which seems to flow on these occasions, really comes from the backs of these bigots : for it is probable that, like their frantic predecessors, they may use some craft, as well as zeal, in this their fury ; and I cannot but think, that there was a great deal of justice in that edict of the emperor Commodus, with regard to these *Bellonarii*, or whippers of antiquity, though it is usually imputed to his cruelty, when

\* Tantus est perturbatæ mentis furor, ut sic Dii placentur, quemadmodum ne homines quidem sæviunt. Dii autem nullo debent coli genere, si et hoc volunt. 'Teterrimi tyranni laceraverunt aliquorum membra ; neminem sua lacerare jusserunt. *Seneca Fragm. apud Lipsii Elect. L. ii. 18.*

he commanded, that they should not be suffered to impose upon the spectators, but be obliged to cut and slash themselves in good earnest.\*

\* *Bellonæ servientes vere exsecare brachium præcepit, studio crudelitatis. Lamprid. in Commodo, 9.*

From delight in cruelty, he commanded the worshippers of Bellona to cut their arms in reality.—[D.]

## CHAPTER VII.

### FALSE MIRACLES.

IF I had leisure to examine the pretended miracles, and *pious frauds* of the Romish church, I should be able to trace them all from the same source of Paganism, and find that the priests of new Rome are not degenerated from their predecessors, in the art of forging these holy impostures; which, as Livy observes of old Rome, “were always multiplied in proportion to the credulity and disposition of the poor people to swallow them.”\*

In the early times of the republic, in the war with the Latins, the gods Castor and Pollux are said to have appeared on white horses in the Roman army, which by their assistance gained a complete victory: in memory of which, the general Posthumius vowed and built a temple publicly to those deities; and for a proof of the fact, there was shown, we find, in Cicero’s time, the mark of the horses’ hoofs on a rock at Regillum, where they first appeared.†

\* Quæ quo magis credebant simplices et religiosi homines eo plura nunciabantur. *Liv. L. xxiv. 10.*

† Cicero de Nat. Deor. L. iii. 5.

Now this miracle, with many others, that I could mention of the same kind, has, I dare say, as authentic an attestation, as any which the Papists can produce:—the decree of a senate to confirm it; a temple erected in consequence of it; visible marks of the fact on the spot where it was transacted;—and all this supported by the concurrent testimony of the best authors of antiquity; amongst whom Dionysius of Halicarnassus says,\* that there were subsisting in his time at Rome many evident proofs of its reality, besides a yearly festival, with a solemn sacrifice and procession in memory of it: yet for all this, these stories were but the jest of men of sense, even in the times of heathenism; and seem so extravagant to us now, that we wonder how there could ever be any so simple as to believe them.

What better opinion then can we have of all those of the same stamp in the Popish legends, which they have plainly built on this foundation, and copied from this very original? Not content with barely copying, they seldom fail to improve the old story, with some additional forgery and invention of their own. Thus in the present case, instead of two persons on white horses, they take care to introduce three; and not only on white horses, but at the head of white armies; as in an old history of the holy wars, written by a pretended eye-witness, and published by Mabillon, it is solemnly affirmed of

\* Dion. Halic. L. vi. p. 337. Edit. Hudson.

St. George, Demetrius, and Theodorus.\* They show us too in several parts of Italy, the marks of hands and feet on rocks and stones, said to have been effected miraculously by the apparition of some saint or angel on the spot: just as the impression of the feet of Hercules was shown of old on a stone in Scythia,† exactly resembling the footsteps of a man. And they have also many churches and public monuments‡ erected, in testimony of such miracles, viz., of saints and angels fighting visibly for them in their battles; which though always as ridiculous as that above mentioned, are not yet supported by half so good evidence of their reality.§

“The religion of Ceres of Enna was celebrated, as Cicero informs us, with a wonderful devotion, both in public and private, through all Sicily: for her presence and divinity had been frequently manifested to them by numerous pro-

\* Vid. Bell. Sac. Hist. in Mabill. Iter. Ital. T. i. Par. ii. p. 138, 155.

† Herodot. L. iv. p. 4, 251. Edit. Lond.

‡ There is an altar of marble in St. Peter's, one of the greatest pieces of modern sculpture, representing in figures as large as life, the story of Attila king of the Huns, who in full march towards Rome with a victorious army, in order to pillage it, was frightened and driven back by the apparition of an angel, in the time of pope Leo the first.

The castle and church of St. Angelo have their title from the apparition of an angel over the place, in the time of Gregory the great. *Rom. Moder. Giorn. i. Rion. di. Borgo i.*

§ Divum Jacobum nationis Hispanicæ, qui armatus sæpe visus in sublime præire ac protegere acies Hispanorum, nobilesque iis victorias in sacris bellis conciliare. *Boldonni Epi-graph. L. ii. p. 349.*

Saint James of the Spanish nation, who was often seen in the air, to advance before and protect the army of the Spaniards, and to grant them notable victories in the holy wars.—[D.]



digies, and many people had received immediate help from her in their utmost distress. Her image therefore in that temple was held in such veneration, that whenever men beheld it, they fancied themselves beholding either Ceres herself, or the figure of her at least, not made by human hands, but dropt down to them from heaven.”\* Now if in the place of Ceres of Enna, we should insert into this relation, our lady of Loretto, or of Impruneta, or any other miraculous image in Italy; the very same account would suit as exactly with the history of the modern saint, as it is told by the present Romans, as it formerly did with that of Ceres, as it is transmitted to us by the ancients. And what else indeed are all their miraculous images, which we see in every great town, said to be made by angels, and sent to them from heaven,† but mere

\* *Mira quædam tota Sicilia privatim ac publice religio est Cereris Ennensis. Etenim multa sæpe prodigia vim ejus numenque declarant: multis sæpe in difficillimis rebus præsens auxilium ejus oblatum est, &c. Cic. in Verr. iv. 49.*

Alterum autem Ennæ (simulacrum Cereris) erat tale, ut homines cum viderent, aut ipsam se videre Cererem, aut effigiem Cereris, non humana manu factam, sed cælo delapsam arbitrentur. *Ib. v. 7.*

† Sed quorsum hic Sancti Dominici imaginem, quæ apud Surrianum in Calabria jugibus nunc miraculis præfulget, silentio obvolvimus? de Cælo quippe, ut pio traditio est, hæc primum anno 1530 delata validissimum adversus impios Iconoclastas propugnaculum exhibet. *Aring. Rom. Subter. L. v. c. 5.*

Wherefore do we hide in silence the image of Saint Dominic, which at Surrianum in Calabria now shines, by perpetual miracles? For this image, brought down from heaven, as the pious tradition is, in 1530, affords a most mighty weapon against the impious Iconoclasts, or *image breakers*.—[D.]

This *Saint Dominic* was the principal founder of the horrible and bloody Inquisition.

copies of the ancient fables, or the image of Diana dropped from the clouds;\* or the Palladium of Troy, which, according to old authors, was a wooden statue three cubits long, which fell from heaven.

In one of their churches here, they show a picture of the Virgin, which, as their writers affirm,† was brought down from heaven with great pomp, and after having hung awhile with surprising lustre in the air, in the sight of all the clergy and people of Rome, was delivered by angels into the hands of pope John the first, who marched out in solemn procession, in order to receive this celestial present.

And is not this exactly of a piece with the old Pagan story of king Numa, when, in this same city, he issued from his palace, with priests and people after him, and with public prayer and solemn devotion received the ancile, or heavenly shield, which, in the presence of all the people of Rome, was sent down to him with much the same formality from the clouds? And as that wise prince, for the security of his heavenly present, ordered several others to be made so exactly like it, that the original could not be distinguished; so the Romish priests have thence taken the hint, to form, after each celestial pattern, a number of copies, so perfectly resembling each other, as to occasion endless squabbles among themselves about their several pretensions to the divine original.

\* Acts xix. 35.

† Vid. Rom. Modern. Giorn. ii. Rion. di Ripa, c. xliii.

The rod of Moses, with which he performed his miracles, is still preserved, as they pretend, and shown here with great devotion, in one of the principal churches : and just so the rod of Romulus, with which he performed his auguries, was preserved by the priests, as a sacred relic in old Rome, and kept with great reverence from being touched or handled by the people :\* which rod too, like most of the Popish relics, had the testimony of a miracle in proof of its sanctity ; for when the temple where it was kept, was burnt to the ground, it was found entire under the ashes, and untouched by the flames :† which same miracle has been borrowed and exactly copied by the present Romans, in many instances ; particularly, in a miraculous image of our Saviour in St. John Lateran ; over which the flames, it seems, had no power, though the church itself has been twice destroyed by fire.‡

Nothing is more common among the miracles of Popery, than to hear of images, that on certain occasions had spoken ; or shed tears ; or sweat ; or bled : and do not we find the very same stories in all the heathen writers ? Of which I could bring numberless examples from old as well as new Rome, from Pagan as well as Popish legends. Rome, as the describer of it says,§

\* Plutarch in Camil.

† Plutarch in Romul.

‡ Rom. Modern. Gior. vi. Rion. di Monti xi.

§ Non si puo negare, che per le grande abbondanza, che ha' Roma in simili tesori, non siano stati negligenti i nostri Maggiori, in darne buon conto à posterì loro. *Rom. Mod. R. di Monti* xxi.

abounds with these treasures, or speaking images: but he laments the negligence of their ancestors, in not recording, so particularly as they ought, the very words and other circumstances of such conversations. They show us here an image of the Virgin, which reprimanded Gregory the Great for passing by her too carelessly: and, in St. Paul's church, a crucifix, which spoke to St. Bridget.\* Durantus mentions another Madonna, which spoke to the sexton in commendation of the piety of one of her votaries.† And did not the image of Fortune do the same, or more, in old Rome? which, as authors say, spoke twice in praise of those matrons, who had dedicated a temple to her.‡

They have a church here dedicated to St. Mary the Weeper, or to a Madonna famous for shedding tears: they show an image too of our Saviour, which for some time before the sacking of Rome wept so heartily, that the good fathers of the monastery were all employed in wiping its face with cotton:§ and was not the case just the same among their ancestors, when on the

\* Ad sanctum Paulum, ubi vidimus ligneam Crucifixi imaginem, quem sancta Brigida sibi loquentem audivisse perhibetur. *Mabill. D. Italic.* p. 133.

† Imaginem Sanctæ Mariæ custodem Ecclesiæ allocutam et Alexii singularem pietatem commendasse. *Durant de Rit.* L. i. c. 5.

‡ Fortunæ item Muliebris simulacrum, quod est in via Latina, non semel, sed bis locutum constitit, his pæne verbis: Bene me, matronæ, vidistis, riteque dedicastis. *Valer. Max.* i. 8.

§ Dicono, ch'avanti il sacco di Roma pianse piu volte, e li Padri ci venissero ad asciugar le lagrime con bombace. *Gior. vi. Riodi Mon.* xxxi.

approach of some public calamity, the statue of "Apollo," as Livy tells us, "wept for three days and nights successively?"\* They have another church built in honor of an image, which bled very plentifully, from a blow given to it by a blasphemer: and were not the old idols too as full of blood, when, as Livy relates, "all the images in the temple of Juno were seen to sweat with drops of it?"†

All which prodigies, as well modern as ancient, are derived from the same source, viz., the contrivance of priests or governors, in order to draw some gain or advantage out of the poor people, whom they thus impose upon.

Xenophon, though himself much addicted to superstition, speaking of the prodigies, which preceded the battle of Leuctra, and portended victory to the Thebans, tells us, that "some people looked upon them all as forged and contrived by the magistrates,"‡ the better to animate and encourage the multitude: and as the originals themselves were but impostures, it is no wonder that the copies of them appear such gross and bungling forgeries.

I have observed a story in Herodotus,§ not unlike the account which is given of the famed

\* Apollo triduum et tres noctes lacrymavit. *Liv.* L. xliiii. 13.

† Signa ad Junonis Sospitæ sudore manavere. *Liv.* xxiii. 31. Ad lucum Feroniæ sanguine sudarunt. *Ib.* xxvii. 4.

‡ Οἱ μὲν δὴ τινες λέγουσιν ὡς ταῦτα πάντα τεχνάσματα ἦν τῶν προεστηκότων. *Xenoph. Hellen.* L. iv

§ Herodot. L. iv. p. 235. Edit. Lond.

travels of *the house of Loretto* ;\* of certain sacred mystical things, that travelled about from country to country, and after many removals and journeys, settled at last, for good and all, in Delus. But this imposture of the holy house might be suggested rather, as Mr. Addison has observed,† by the extraordinary veneration paid in old Rome to the cottage of its founder Romulus: which was held sacred by the people, and repaired with great care from time to time, with the same kind of materials, so as to be kept in the same form in which it was originally built. It was turned also, I find, like this other

\* One of the most ridiculous and contemptible of all the "lying wonders" of Popery is the *Santissima Casa*, or holy house of the Virgin, at Loretto, a small town in the Pope's dominions in Italy. The Popish priests pretend that this is the house in which the Virgin Mary was born, and was carried by angels through the air, from Nazareth to Loretto some centuries ago; and that the Virgin Mary herself appeared to an old man to reveal to him the wonderful fact. They also show the *Santissima Scodella*, or holy porringer, in which they gravely assert, the pap was made for the infant Jesus (!) The pilgrims who visit this laughable imposture, regard it as a special favor to obtain a chaplet or a rosary that has been shaken in this wonderful porringer, duly certified by the priests, or an inch square of the Virgin's old veil, which is changed every year.

Incredible as it may seem, the great body of Romanists, amidst the light of the nineteenth century, profess actually to believe this most absurd of all impostures; and a regular establishment of priests is maintained, with an annual revenue of many thousand dollars, the proceeds of the exhibition. A small pebble picked up in the house, duly certified, has been sold for ten dollars, and an unfortunate mouse that had concealed itself under the Virgin's dress, for as much as would purchase an ox, and afterward embalmed by the purchaser, and kept as a preservative against diseases and accidents. The Litany to the "Lady of Loretto" may be found in the "*Garden of the Soul*," (page 288,) *New-York Edition*. Published with the approbation of Bishop Hughes, 1844.—[D.]

† Addison's Travels from Pesaro to Rome.



cottage of our lady, into a temple, and had divine service performed in it, till it happened to be burnt down by the fire of a sacrifice in the time of Augustus; but what makes the similitude still more remarkable is, that this pretended cottage of Romulus was shown on the Capitoline Hill: whereas it is certain that Romulus himself lived on Mount Palatine:\* so that, if it had really been the house of Romulus, it must needs, like the holy house of Loretto, have taken a leap in the air, and suffered a miraculous translation, though not from so great a distance, yet from one hill at least to the other.

But if we follow their own writers, it is not the holy house of Loretto, but the homely *cradle of our Saviour*, that we should compare rather with the little house of Romulus: which cradle is now shown in St. Mary the Great, and on Christmas day, exposed on the high altar to the adoration of the people; being held in the same veneration by present Rome, as the humble cottage of its founder had been by its old inhabitants. Rome, says Baronius, "is now in possession of that noble monument of Christ's nativity, made only of wood, without any ornament of silver or gold, and is made more happily illustrious by it, than it was of old by the cottage of Romulus; which, though built only with mud and straw, our ancestors preserved with great care for many ages."†

\* Plutarch in Romul.

† Porro in Christi natalis nobile monumentum ex ligno confectum nullâque argenti vel auri cœlaturâ confectum, Roma



The melting of St. Januarius's blood at Naples, whenever it is brought to his head, which is done with great solemnity on the day of his festival,\* whilst at all other times it continues dried and congealed in a glass phial, is one of the standing and most authentic miracles of Italy.† Yet Mr. Addison, who twice saw it performed, assures us, that instead of appearing to be a real miracle, he thought it one of the most bungling tricks that he had ever seen.‡

Mabillon's account of the fact seems to solve it very naturally, without the help of a miracle: for during the time that a mass or two are celebrated in the church, the other priests are tampering with this phial of blood, which is suspended all the while in such a situation, that as soon as any part of it begins to melt by the heat of their hands, or other management, it drops of course into the lower side of the glass, which is empty;§ upon the first discovery of

possidet, eoque multo feliciùs illustratur quàm tugurio Romuli, &c. *Vid. Baron. An. i. Christi v.*

\* De sancti Januarii cruore mirum quiddam narratur in Breviario Romano—quod ejus sanguis, qui in ampulla vitrea concretus asservatur, cum in conspectu capitis ponitur, admirandum in modum colliquifieri videtur. *Aringh. Rom. Subter. L. i. 16.*

A very wonderful thing is related in the Roman Breviary, concerning the blood of St. Januarius. That his blood, which is kept congealed in a glass phial, when it is placed in sight of his head, is seen to become liquid in a wonderful manner.—[D.]

† For an amusing incident connected with this pretended miracle, during the invasion of Italy by the troops of Napoleon, see Appendix A.

‡ Addison's Trav. at Naples.

§ Mabill. Iter. Ital. p. 106.

which, the miracle is proclaimed aloud, to the great joy and edification of the people.

But by what way soever it be effected, it is plainly nothing else but the copy of an old cheat of the same kind, transacted near the same place, which Horace makes himself merry with in his journey to Brundisium; telling us how the priests would have imposed upon him and his friends, at a town called Gnatia, by persuading them that the frankincense in the temple used to dissolve and melt miraculously of itself, without the help of fire.\*

In the cathedral church of Ravenna, I saw in Mosaic work the pictures of those archbishops of the place, who, as all their historians affirm,† were chosen for several ages successively by the special designation of the Holy Ghost, who, in a full assembly of the clergy and people, used to descend visibly on the person elect, in the shape of a dove. If the fact of such a descent be true, it will easily be accounted for by a passage in Aulus Gellius, (whence the hint was probably taken,) who tells us of Archytas the philosopher and mathematician, that he formed a pigeon of wood so artificially, as to make it fly by the power of mechanism, just as he directed it.‡ And we find from Strada, that many tricks of this kind were actually contrived for the diversion of Charles the fifth in his monastery, by one Turrianus, who made little birds fly out of the

\* Hor. Sat. i. v. ver. 98.

† Hist. Raven. &c. Aringh. Rom. Subt. L. vi. c. 48

‡ Aul. Gell. Noct. Att. L. x. 12.

room and back again, by his great skill in machinery.

It would be endless to run through all the Popish miracles, which are evidently forged, or copied from the originals of Paganism; since there is scarce a prodigy in the old historians, or a fable in the old poets, but what is transcribed into their legends, and swallowed by their silly bigots, as certain and undoubted facts.

The story of Arion the musician, riding triumphant with his harp on the back of a dolphin, that took him up when thrown overboard at sea, is, one would think, too grossly fabulous to be applied to any purpose of Christian superstition: yet our present Romans so far surpass the old in fable and imposture, that out of this single story they have coined many of the same stamp, viz., of dolphins taking up and bringing ashore with great pomp several of their saints, both dead and alive, who had been thrown into the sea by infidels, either to drown, or to deprive them of burial.\*

The fable of the harpies, those furies or winged monsters, who were so troublesome to Æneas and his companions,† seems to be copied in the very first church within the walls of Rome, close to the gate of the people, as it is called, by which we enter it from the north: where there is an altar with a public inscription signifying, that it was “built by pope Paschal the second, by divine inspiration, in order to

\* Aringh. Rom. Subter. L. i. c. 9, 10.

† Virg. Æn. iii. 211.

drive away a nest of huge demons or monsters, who used to perch upon a tree in that very place, and terribly insult all who entered the city.”\*

The Popish writers themselves are forced to allow, that many both of their relics and their miracles have been forged by the craft of priests, for the sake of money and lucre. Durantus, a zealous defender of all their ceremonies, gives several instances of the former; particularly of the bones of a common thief, which had for some time been honored with an altar, and worshipped under the title of a saint.† And for the latter; Lyra, in his Comment on Bel and the Dragon, observes, that “sometimes also in the church, very great cheats are put upon the people by false miracles, contrived, or countenanced at least, by their priests for some gain and temporal advantage.”‡ And what their own authors confess of some of their miracles, we may ven-

\* ALTARE A PASCHALI PAPA II. DIVINO AFFLATU  
RITU SOLEMNI HOC LOCO ERECTUM,  
QUO DÆMONES PROCEROS  
NUCIS ARBORI INSIDENTES,  
TRANSEUNTEM HINC POPULUM DIRE INSULTANTES,  
CONFESTIM EXPULIT,  
URBANI VIII. PONT. MAX. AUCTORITATE  
EXCELSIOREM IN LOCUM QUEM CONSPICIS  
TRANSLATUM FUIT  
AN. DOM. MDCXXVII.

† S. Martinus altare, quod in honorem Martyris exstructum fuerat, cum ossa et reliquias cujusdam latronis esse deprehendisset, submoveri jussit. *Durant. de Ritib.* L. i. c. 25.

St. Martin ordered the altar which had been constructed in honor of a martyr to be removed when he discovered the bones and remains to be those of a certain thief.—[D.]

‡ Aliquando fit in Ecclesia maxima deceptio populi in miraculis fictis à sacerdotibus, vel eis adhærentibus propter lucrum temporale, &c. *Vid. Nic. Lyr. in Dan.* c. xiv.

ture, without any breach of charity, to believe of them all; nay, we cannot indeed believe any thing else without impiety; and without supposing God to concur in an extraordinary manner, to the establishment of fraud, error, and superstition in the world.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### CHURCH REFUGE—ORDERS OF PRIESTS AND FRIARS.

THE refuge or protection given to all who fly to the church for shelter, is a privilege directly transferred from the heathen temples to the Popish churches; and has been practised in Rome from the time of its founder Romulus; who, in imitation of the cities of Greece, opened an asylum or sanctuary to fugitives of all nations.

But we may observe the great moderation of Pagan, above that of Popish Rome, in regard to this custom; for I do not remember that there ever was more than one asylum in the times of the republic; whereas there are now some hundreds in the same city; and when that single one (which was opened rather for the increase of its inhabitants than the protection of criminals) was found in the end to give too great encouragement to mischief and licentiousness, they enclosed it round in such a manner as to hinder all access to it: whereas, the present Popish sanctuaries stand perpetually open, not to receive strangers, but to shelter villains; so

that it may literally be said of these, what our Saviour said of the Jewish temple, that they have turned the house of prayer into a den of thieves.\*

In the early ages of Christianity there were many limitations put upon the use of this privilege by emperors and councils ; and the greater crimes of murder, adultery, theft, &c., were especially excepted from the benefit of it : but now they scruple not to receive to sanctuary, even the most detestable crimes ; and it is owing, without doubt, to this policy of holy church, that murders are so common with them in Italy on slight provocations ; whilst there is a church always at hand and always open, to secure offenders from legal punishment ; several of whom have been shown to me in different places, walking about at their ease, and in full security within the bounds of their sanctuary.

In their very *priesthood* they have contrived, one would think, to keep up as near a resemblance as they could, to that of Pagan Rome : and the sovereign pontiff, instead of deriving his succession from St. Peter, (who, if ever he was at Rome, did not reside there at least in any worldly pomp or splendor,) may with more reason, and a much better plea, style himself the successor of the *Pontifex Maximus*, or chief priest of old Rome ; whose authority and dignity was the greatest in the republic ; and who was looked upon as the arbiter or judge of all things, civil as well as sacred, human as well as divine ;

\* Matth. xxi. 13.



whose power, established almost with the foundation of the city, "was an omen (says Polydore Virgil) and sure presage of that priestly majesty, by which Rome was once again to reign as universally as it had done before by the force of its arms."<sup>\*</sup>

But of all the sovereign pontiffs of Pagan Rome, it is very remarkable that Caligula was the first who ever offered his *foot to be kissed* by any who approached him: which raised a general indignation through the city, to see themselves reduced to suffer so great an indignity. Those who endeavored to excuse it said, that it was not done out of insolence, but vanity; and for the sake of showing his golden slipper, set with jewels. Seneca declaims upon it, in his usual manner, as the last affront to liberty; and the introduction of a Persian slavery into the manners of Rome.† Yet this servile act, unworthy either to be imposed or complied with by man, is now the standing ceremonial of Christian Rome, and a necessary condition of access to the reigning popes, though derived from no better origin, than the frantic pride of a brutal Pagan tyrant.

The great variety of their *religious orders* and societies of priests seems to have been formed upon the plan of the old colleges or fraternities of the Augurs, Pontifices, Salii, Fratres

\* Certum portentum quo est significatum, Urbem Romam postremo perinde Pontificia Majestate, qua nunc late patet, gentibus moderaturam, atque olim potentia imperasset. *Pol. Virg. Inv. rer. L. iv. 14.*

† Senec. de Benef. L. ii. 12.

Arvales, &c. The vestal virgins might furnish the hint for the foundation of nunneries: and I have observed something very like to the rules and austerities of the monastic life, in the character and manner of several priests of the heathens, who used to live by themselves, retired from the world, near to the temple or oracle of the deity, to whose particular service they were devoted; as the Selli, the priests of Dodonæan Jove, a self-mortifying race.

ἀμφὶ δὲ Σελλοὶ  
Σοὶ ναίουσ' ὑποφῆται ἀνιπτόποδες χαμαιεῦναι.  
*Hom. Il. xvii. 234.*

“Whose groves the Selli, race austere, surround;  
Their feet unwash'd, their slumbers on the ground.”\*  
*Pope.*

But above all, in the old descriptions of the lazy mendicant priests among the heathens, who used to travel from house to house, with sacks on their backs; and, from an opinion of their sanctity, raise large contributions of money, bread, wine, and all kinds of victuals, for the support of their fraternity,† we see the very picture of the begging friars; who are always about the streets in the same habit, and on the same

\* From the character of these Selli, or as others call them, Elli, the monks of the Pagan world, seated in the fruitful soil of Dodona; abounding, as Hesiod describes it, with every thing that could make life easy and happy; and whither no man ever approached them without an offering in his hands, we may learn whence their successors of modern times have derived that peculiar skill or prescriptive right, of choosing the richest part of every country for the place of their settlement. *Vid. Sophoc. Trachin. p. 340, v. 1175. Edit. Turneb. and Schol. Triclin.*

† Apuleius *Metam. l. viii. p. 262.*

errand, and never fail to carry home with them a good sack full of provisions for the use of their convent.

Cicero, in his book of laws, restrains this practice of begging, or gathering alms, to one particular order of priests, and that only on certain days ; because, as he says, it propagates superstition and impoverishes families.\* Which, by the way, may let us see the policy of the church of Rome, in the great care that they have taken to multiply their begging orders.

\* *Stipendiū sustulimus, nisi eam quam ad paucos dies propriam Idææ Matris excepiamus : implet enim superstitione animos, exhaurit domos. Cic. de Legib. L. ii. 9, 16.*

## CHAPTER IX.

### CONCLUSION.

I COULD easily carry on this parallel through many more instances of the Pagan and Popish ceremonies, if I had not already said enough, to show from what spring all that superstition flows, which we so justly charge them with, and how vain an attempt it must be to justify, by the principles of Christianity, a worship formed upon the plan, and after the very pattern of pure heathenism.\* I shall not trouble myself with inquiring at what time, and in what manner these several corruptions were introduced into the church: whether they were contrived by the intrigues and avarice of priests, who found their advantage in reviving and propagating impostures, which had been of old so profitable to

\* It is a remarkable fact that a resemblance exists between Popery and some systems of modern Paganism, almost as striking as that which Dr. Middleton shows between Popery and ancient Paganism. For a letter addressed to the Editor, in proof of this remark, by a distinguished missionary, see Appendix B.

their predecessors; or whether the genius of Rome was so strongly turned to fanaticism and superstition, that they were forced, in condescension to the humor of the people, to dress up their new religion to the modes and fopperies of the old. This, I know, is the principle by which their own writers defend themselves, as oft as they are attacked on this head.

Aringhus, in his account of subterraneous Rome, acknowledges this conformity between the Pagan and Popish rites, and defends the admission of the ceremonies of heathenism into the service of the church, by the authority of their wisest popes and governors, "who found it necessary, he says, in the conversion of the Gentiles, to dissemble and wink at many things, and yield to the times; and not to use force against customs, which the people were so obstinately fond of; nor to think of extirpating at once every thing that had the appearance of profane; but to supersede in some measure the obligation of the sacred laws; till these converts, convinced by degrees, and informed of the whole truth, by the suggestions of the Holy Spirit, should be content to submit in earnest to the yoke of Christ."\*

\* *Ac maximi subinde Pontifices quamplurima primâ quidem facie dissimulanda duxere, optimum videlicet rati temporis deferendum esse; suadebant quippe sibi, haud ullam adversus gentilitios ritus vim, utpote qui mordicus a fidelibus retinebantur, adhibendam esse; neque ullatenus enitendum, ut quicquid profanos saperet mores, omnino tolleretur, quin imo quam maxima utendum lenitate, sacrarumque legum ex parte intermittendum imperium arbitrabantur, &c. Vid. Aring. Rom. Subter. Tom. i. L. i. c. 21.*

It is by the same principles, that the Jesuits defend the concessions, which they make at this day to their proselytes in China; who, where pure Christianity will not go down, never scruple to compound the matter between Jesus and Confucius; and prudently allow, what the stiff old prophets so impolitically condemned, a partnership between God and Baal: of which, though they have often been accused at the Court of Rome, yet I have never heard that their conduct has been censured.\* But this kind of reasoning, how plausible soever it may be with regard to the first ages of Christianity, or to nations just converted from Paganism, is so far from excusing the present Gentilism of the church of Rome, that it is a direct condemnation of it; since the necessity alleged for the practice, if ever it had any real force, has not, at least for many ages past, at all subsisted; and their toleration of such practices, however useful at first for reconciling heathens to Christianity, seems now to be the readiest way to drive Christians back again to heathenism.

But it is high time for me to conclude, being persuaded, if I do not flatter myself too much, that I have sufficiently made good what I first undertook to prove: an exact conformity, or uni-

\* This remark of Dr. Middleton must be understood with some qualification, as in point of fact a decree was issued against the proceedings of the Jesuits in China, by pope Clement XI. in 1704, though the effect of this decree was nullified by a subsequent one from the same Pope in 1715. For some particulars relative to the proceedings of the Jesuit missionaries, see Appendix C.

formity, rather, of worship, between Popery and Paganism; for since, as I have shown above, we see the present people of Rome worshipping in the same temples, at the same altars, sometimes the same images, and always with the same ceremonies, as the old Romans; they must have more charity, as well as skill in distinguishing, than I pretend to have, who can absolve them from the same superstition and idolatry, of which we condemn their Pagan ancestors.



A DEFENCE  
OF THE  
LETTER FROM ROME,  
IN REPLY TO A WORK ENTITLED  
"THE CATHOLIC CHRISTIAN INSTRUCTED,"  
BY  
CONYERS MIDDLETON, D. D.



DEFENCE  
OF THE  
LETTER FROM ROME.

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A LATE writer of a Popish book, entitled *The Catholic Christian Instructed, &c.*, has thought fit, in a preface to that work, to attempt a confutation of my *Letter from Rome*; “which every reader,” he says, “whether Protestant or Papist, would expect that he should take some notice of, as it is directly levelled at their ceremonies, and has been so well received, as to pass through three editions within the compass of a few years.”

§ 1. *Preliminary Remarks.*—I cannot think it strange, that a man, whose avowed design and sole employment amongst us is, to make converts to the Romish church, should treat a work with some acrimony, that was published with no other view than to blast his hopes, and obstruct his endeavors, to delude the people of this nation: but it gives me a sensible pleasure to observe, what these missionaries of Rome are forced to confess, that my little performance is a

real obstacle to their designs; and that one of the first steps necessary towards advancing the Popish interest in England, is to overthrow the credit both of the letter and its author.

Our Catholic therefore, in the execution of this task, sets out with a general accusation against me of foul play, and disingenuity, and a resolution to suppress the truth; because my charge against them is grounded only, he says, "on certain ceremonies and observances of less moment, without taking notice of the substantial parts of their religion; their belief of the Scriptures; of the three Creeds; of the Trinity; the Eucharist Sacrifice, &c., which none will pretend to be derived to them from the Pagans." This is artfully thrown out, to confound the true state of the question; and to prepossess the reader with a notion, that, instead of Popery, I am attacking Christianity itself, and sustaining the cause of infidelity, not of protestantism; but every man of sense will discern the fallacy, and observe that it is Popery alone with which I am engaged; or that system of ceremonies and doctrines which is peculiar to the Romish church, as distinguished from other Christian churches: the source of which I have undertaken to lay open, and by a historical deduction of facts, to trace its origin in a direct line, from Pagan down to Popish Rome.

In the farther support of this charge, I shall now proceed to examine our author's exceptions to it, in the order as they lie in his preface, and vindicate all the particular proofs of it alleged in

my letter, to which he has thought proper to give any answer: the chief of which, as he tells us, are "incense; holy water; lamps and candles; votive offerings; images; chapels on the waysides and tops of hills; processions; miracles." On these I shall join issue with him; and endeavor to show, that his defence of them is not only frivolous and evasive, but tends rather to confirm than to confute the inference which I have drawn from them.

§ 2. *Origin of Popish Rites.*—As to several of these articles, he makes one general apology; that I "am mistaken in thinking every ceremony used by the heathens to be heathenish, since the greatest part were borrowed from the worship of the true God; in imitation of which the devil affected to have his temples, altars, priests and sacrifices, and all other things, which were used in the true worship." This he applies to the case of incense, lamps, holy water, and processions; and adds, "that if I had been as well read in the Scriptures, as I would seem to be in the heathen poets, I should have found the use of all these in the temple of God, and that by God's appointment."

I shall not dispute with him about the origin of these rites; whether they were first instituted by Moses, or were of prior use and antiquity among the Egyptians. The Scriptures favor the last; which our Spenser strongly asserts, and their Calmet and Huetius allow: but should we grant him all that he can infer from his argument, what will he gain by it? Were not all

those beggarly elements wiped away by the spiritual worship of the gospel? Were they not all annulled on the account of their weakness and unprofitableness, by the more perfect revelation of Jesus Christ?\* If then I should acknowledge my mistake, and recall my words; and instead of Pagan, call them Jewish ceremonies, would not the use of Jewish rites be abominable still in a Christian church, where they are expressly abolished and prohibited by God himself?

But to pursue his argument a little farther: while the Mosaic worship subsisted by divine appointment in Jerusalem, the devil likewise, as he tells us, had temples and ceremonies of the same kind in order to draw votaries to his idolatrous worship: which, after the abolition of the Jewish service, was carried on still with great pomp and splendor; and, above all places, in Rome, the principal seat of his worldly empire. Now it is certain, that in the early times of the gospel, the Christians of Rome were celebrated for their zealous adherence to the faith of Christ, as it was delivered to them by the apostles, pure from every mixture either of Jewish or heathenish superstition; till after a succession of ages, as they began gradually to deviate from that apostolic simplicity, they introduced at different times into the church the particular ceremonies in question. Whence then can we think it probable, that they should borrow them? From the Jewish or the Pagan ritual? From a temple

\* Galat. iv. 9. Heb. vii. 18.

remote, despised, and demolished by the Romans themselves; or from temples and altars perpetually in their view, and subsisting in their streets; in which their ancestors and fellow-citizens had constantly worshipped? The question can hardly admit any dispute: the humor of the people, as well as interest of a corrupted priesthood would invite them to adopt such rites as were native to the soil, and found upon the place; and which long experience had shown to be useful, to the acquisition both of wealth and power. Thus by the most candid construction of this author's reasoning, we must necessarily call their ceremonies Jewish; or by pushing it to its full length, shall be obliged to call them devilish.

§ 3. *Use of Incense.*—He observes, that I begin my charge with the use of incense, as the most notorious proof of their Paganism, and, like an artful rhetorician, place my strongest argument in the front. Yet he knows that I have assigned a different reason for offering that the first: because it is the first thing that strikes the senses, and surprises a stranger, upon his entrance into their churches. But it shall be my strongest proof, if he will have it so, since he has brought nothing, I am sure, to weaken the force of it. He tells us, that there was an altar of incense in the temple of Jerusalem: and is surprised therefore how I can call it heathenish: yet it is evident, from the nature of that institution, that it was never designed to be perpetual; and that, during its continuance, God would



never have approved any other altar, either in Jerusalem, or any where else. But let him answer directly to this plain question ; was there ever a temple in the world not strictly heathenish, in which there were several altars, all smoking with incense, within one view, and at one and the same time ? It is certain, that he must answer in the negative : yet it is as certain that there were many such temples in Pagan Rome ; and are as many still in Christian Rome : and since there never was an example of it, but what was Paganish, before the times of Popery, how is it possible, that it could be derived to them from any other source ? or when we see so exact a resemblance in the copy, how can there be any doubt about the original ?

What he alleges therefore in favor of incense is nothing to the purpose ; “ that it was used in the Jewish, and is of great antiquity in the Christian church ; and that it is mentioned with honor in the Scriptures ; ” which frequently compare it to prayer, and speak of its sweet odors ascending up to God, &c., which figurative expressions, he says, “ would never have been borrowed by the sacred penmen from heathenish superstition : ” as if such allusions were less proper, or the thing itself less sweet, for its being applied to the purposes of idolatry ; as it constantly was in the times even of the same penmen, and according to their own accounts, on the altars of Baal, and the other heathen idols : and when Jeremiah rebukes the people of Judah for burn-

ing incense to the queen of heaven,\* one can hardly help imagining, that he is prophetically pointing out the worship now paid to the Virgin; to whom they actually burn incense at this day under that very title.†

But if it be a just ground for retaining a practice in the Christian church, because it was enjoined to the Jews, what will our Catholic say for those usages, which were actually prohibited to the Jews, and never practised by any but by the heathens and the papists? All the Egyptian priests, as Herodotus informs us, “had their heads shaved and kept continually bald.”‡ Thus the emperor Commodus, that he might be admitted into that order, “got himself shaved, and carried the god Anubis in procession.”§ And it was on this account most probably, that the Jewish priests were commanded not to shave their heads, nor to make any baldness upon them.¶ Yet this Pagan rasure, or tonsure, as they choose to call it, on the crown of the head, has long been the distinguishing mark of the Romish priesthood. It was on the same account we may imagine, that the Jewish priests were forbidden to make any cuttings in their flesh;¶ since that likewise was the common practice of

\* Jerem. xlv. 17.

† Vid. Offic. Beatæ Virg. *Salve Regina* ; *Ave Regina cœlorum* ; *Domina Angelorum*, &c.

See the offices of the blessed Virgin. Hail queen of heaven, mistress of angels, &c.—[D.]

‡ Herodot. L. ii. 36.

§ *Sacra Isidis coluit, ut et caput raderet et Anubin portaret.*

*Lamprid. in Commod. 9.*

¶ Levitic. xxi. 5. Ezek. xlv. 20.

¶ Levitic. xix. 28; xxi. 5.

certain priests and devotees among the heathens, in order to acquire the fame of a more exalted sanctity. Yet the same discipline, as I have shown in my letter, is constantly practised at Rome, in some of their solemn seasons and processions, in imitation of those Pagan enthusiasts: as if they searched the Scriptures, to learn, not so much what was enjoined by the true religion, as what had been useful at any time in a false one, to delude the multitude, and support an imposture.

§ 4. *Holy Water*.—Our author makes the same apology for holy water, that he has just made for incense; that, in the Mosaic law, we find the mention of a water sanctified for religious uses; which cannot therefore be called heathenish; and that I might, with as good a grace have proved the sacrament of baptism to be heathenish, as their use of holy water. It is surprising to hear such a defence from any one who calls himself a Christian. The sacrament of baptism was ordained by Christ, in the most solemn manner, and for the most solemn purpose, as the essential rite of our initiation into his church; while there is not the least hint in any part of the gospel that any other water was either necessary, or proper, or useful in any degree to the washing away of sin. But our author's zeal seems to have carried him here beyond his prudence; and he forgets what ground he is treading, if he fancies that he can defend, in this protestant country, what he might affirm with applause in a Popish; that the institutions

of Christ stand upon no better foundation than the injunctions of the pope, or at least of the Popish church.

I have mentioned one use of their holy water in a festival at Rome, called *the benediction of horses*, which seems to perplex him. He dares not deny the fact, yet labors to render it suspected, and declares, "that though he had spent the greatest part of his life abroad, he had never seen or heard of any such thing." But whatever he thinks, or would seem rather to think of it, I know the thing to be true from the evidence of my own eyes:\* yet as I had no desire, that the reader should take my bare word for that, or any other fact in the letter, I took care to add such testimonies of it as every one will allow to be authentic. But if he really be a stranger to so extraordinary a practice, he must be an improper advocate of a cause of which he owns himself to be ignorant. The learned Mabillon, as I have observed, intimates his surprise at this, as well as many other parts of their worship, which he had never seen till he travelled into Italy; but, instead of defending, chooses either to drop them in silence, or to give them up as superstitious: which might have been the case also of our Catholic, if he had been better informed of the facts which he has undertaken to vindicate. But if these men of learning, and teachers of religion, know so little of what is done at Rome, how easy must it be to impose upon the poor

\* For the testimony of a recent eye-witness to this absurd ceremony, see Appendix D.

Catholics in England, and keep them in the dark, as to the more exceptionable parts of their worship, which are openly avowed and practised abroad, to the scandal of all the candid, and moderate even of their own communion.

But though our Catholic seems so much ashamed at present of this benediction of horses in their church, I can give him such light into the origin of it, as will make him proud of it probably for the future; from a story that I have observed in St. Jerom; which shows it to be grounded on a miracle, and derived from a saint: I mean St. Hilarion, the founder of the monastic orders in Syria and Palestine.

The story is this; "a citizen of Gaza, a Christian, who kept a stable of running horses for the Circensian games, was always beaten by his antagonist, an idolater; the master of a rival stable. For the idolater, by the help of certain charms, and diabolical imprecations, constantly damped the spirits of the Christian's horses, and added courage to his own. The Christian therefore in despair, applied himself to St. Hilarion, and implored his assistance: but the saint was unwilling to enter into an affair so frivolous and profane; till the Christian urging it as a necessary defence against these adversaries of God, whose insults were levelled not so much at him as at the church of Christ; and his entreaties being seconded by the monks, who were present, the saint ordered his earthen jug, out of which he used to drink, to be filled with water and delivered to the man: who presently sprinkled his

stable, his horses, his charioteers, his chariot, and the very boundaries of the course with it. Upon this, the whole city was in wondrous expectation: the idolaters derided what the Christian was doing; while the Christians took courage, and assured themselves of victory; till the signal being given for the race, the Christian's horses seemed to fly, whilst the idolater's were laboring behind, and left quite out of sight; so that the Pagans themselves were forced to cry out, that their god Marnas was conquered at last by Christ.\* Thus this memorable function, borrowed originally from the Pagan sprinklers of the Circensian games, appears to be as ancient almost in the church as monkery itself, and one of the first inventions, for which Popery stands indebted to that religious institution.

§ 5. *Lighted Candles*.—As to the lamps and candles, which are constantly burning before the altars of their saints, he tells us once more; “that though the devil had procured them to be set up in his temples, yet they were appointed originally by God for the service of his tabernacle; and were not therefore borrowed from the heathenish, but the Mosaic worship.” To which I need not repeat what I have already said on the foregoing articles. I had deduced the origin of these lamps from Egypt, upon the authority of Clemens Alexandrinus: but he declares that Clemens says no such thing: yet does not think fit to tell us what it is that he has said, nor how near it approaches to the interpretation which I

\* Hieron. Op. Tom. iv. par. 2. p. 80.



have given of it. Clemens expressly ascribes the invention of lamps to the Egyptians, in which he is followed by Eusebius; and since lamps were used in all the Pagan temples from the earliest times, of which we have any notice, I take it for a necessary consequence, that the Egyptians were the first who made use of them likewise in their temples.

But let that be as it will, this at least is certain, that the use of them in Christian churches was condemned by many of the primitive bishops and presbyters, as superstitious and heathenish. But all these our Catholic makes no scruple to brand with the title of heretics: though many of them, perhaps, might more truly be called the protestants of the primitive church; particularly Vigilantius;\* who, by all that I have been able to observe about him, incurred the charge of heresy for no other crime than that of writing against monkery; the celibacy of the clergy; praying for the dead; worshipping the relics of martyrs; and lighting up candles to them, after the manner of the Pagans.† But St. Jerom has given the most rational definition of heresy, where he says, “that those who interpret Scripture to any sense, repugnant to that of the Holy Spirit, though they should never withdraw themselves from the church, yet may be justly

\* For an account of the character and doctrines of Vigilantius, as also of Jovinian, another reformer of the fifth century, the editor would refer to his “History of Romanism,” page 78, *note*.—[D.]

† Hieron. Oper. T. iv. par. ii. p. 275, 282. Edit. Benedict.



called heretics.”\* By which criterion the Romish church will be found much more heretical than any of those who, either in ancient or modern times, have separated themselves from its communion on the account of its doctrines.

§ 6. *Votive Offerings*.—My next instance of their Paganism is the number of their donaria or votive offerings, hanging around the altars of their saints: where our author, having nothing to allege from Scripture, nor any example from antiquity, but what is purely heathenish, is forced to change his tone, and to declare, “that things innocent in themselves cannot be rendered unlawful for having been abused by the heathens; and that it cannot be disagreeable to the true God, that those who believe themselves to have received favors from him by the prayers of his saints, should make a public acknowledgment of it.” But can a practice be called innocent which is a confessed copy of Paganish superstition? which tends to weaken our dependence on God, and to place it on those who are not probably in a condition either to hear, or to help us? which imprints the same veneration for the Christian saints that the Pagans paid to their subordinate deities; and transfers the honor due to God to the altars of departed mortals? Such a worship, I say, so far from being innocent, must necessarily be condemned by all unprejudiced men, as profane and idolatrous; as it will more evidently appear to be, from our consideration of the next article, their worship of images.

\* Hieron. Oper. T. iv. par. i. p. 302.

§ 7. *Image Worship*.—On this head, our Catholic pours out all his rage against me; charges me with “slander and misrepresentation, and notorious untruths; says that I am no better friend to Christianity than to Popery; that I imitate the ancient heretics, and copy my arguments from the apostate Julian:” by which he shows in what manner he would silence me, if he had me under his discipline: but I can easily forgive his railing, while I find myself out of his power; and rejoice, that we live in a country where he can use a liberty which no Popish government would indulge to a protestant. The ground of all this clamor is, my treating their image worship as idolatrous: yet he does not pretend to contradict my facts, but the inference only, that I draw from them; and since he cannot overthrow my premises, is the more enraged at my conclusion.

I had defined idols, upon the authority of St. Jerom, to be images of the dead: where he is simple enough to imagine that I included in my definition, all images and pictures whatsoever of the dead; and calls it therefore “a brat of my own, which I falsely father upon St. Jerom.” Yet every man must see, that I could mean no other images but such as I was there treating of; such as had temples, altars, and a religious worship instituted to them; for such are all the images of the Popish church; and of all such images of the dead, I shall affirm again with St. Jerom, that they are true and proper idols.

It is not my present design to enter into a for-

mal discussion of the nature of idolatry ; which according to every sense of it, as our divines have fully demonstrated, is now exercised in Popish Rome upon the very same principles on which it was formerly practised in Pagan Rome. The purpose of the following letter is to illustrate this argument by the more sensible evidence of fact : and, in spite of the cavils and evasive distinctions of their schools, to show their worship of images or of saints, call it which they will, to be properly and actually idolatrous. But our author defines idols “to be such images only as are set up for gods, and honored as such ; or in which some divinity or power is believed to reside by their worshippers ; who accordingly offer prayers and sacrifice to them, and put their trust in them.”

“Such” says he, “were the idols of the Gentiles,” and such, I shall venture to say, are the idols of the Papists. For what else can we say of those miraculous images, as they are called, in every great town of Italy, but that some divinity or power is universally believed to reside in them ? Are not all their people persuaded, and do not all their books testify, that these images have sometimes moved themselves from one place to another ; have wept, talked, and wrought many miracles ? And does not this necessarily imply an extraordinary power residing in them ? In the high street of Loretto, which leads to the holy house, the shops are filled with beads, crucifixes, Agnus Dei’s, and all the trinkets of Popish manufacture ; where I observed printed

certificates or testimonials, affixed to each shop, declaring all their toys to have been *touched by the blessed image* ; which certificates are provided for no other purpose but to humor the general persuasion, both of the buyer and the seller, that some virtue is communicated by that touch, from a power residing in the image.

In one of the churches of Lucca they show an image of the Virgin with the child Jesus in her arms, of which they relate this story, "that a blaspheming gamester, in rage and despair, took up a stone and threw it at the infant ; but the Virgin, to preserve him from the blow, which was levelled at his head, shifted him instantly from her right arm into the left, in which he is now held ; while the blasphemer was swallowed up by the earth upon the spot ; where the hole, which they declare to be unfathomable, is still kept open, and enclosed only with a grate, just before the altar of the image. The Virgin, however, received the blow upon her shoulder, whence the blood presently issued, which is preserved in a crystal, and produced with the greatest ceremony by the priest in his vestments, with tapers lighted, while all the company kiss the sacred relic on their knees."\* Now does not the attestation of this miracle naturally tend to persuade people, that there is an actual power residing in the image, which can defend itself from injuries, and inflict vengeance on all who dare to insult it ?

One of the most celebrated images in Italy is

\* See Mr. Wright's Travels at Lucca.

that of St. Dominic, of Surriano in Calabria, which, as their histories testify, was brought down from heaven about two centuries ago, by the Virgin Mary in person, accompanied by Mary Magdalene and St. Catharine. Before this glorious picture, as they affirm, "great numbers of the dead have been restored to life, and hundreds from the agonies of death; the dumb, the blind, the deaf, the lame have been cured, and all sorts of diseases and mortal wounds miraculously healed:" all which facts are attested by public notaries; and confirmed by the relations of cardinals, prelates, generals, and priors of that order; and the certainty of them so generally believed, that from the ninth of July to the ninth of August, the anniversary festival of the saint, they have always counted above a hundred thousand pilgrims, and many of them of the highest quality, who come from different parts of Europe to pay their devotions and make their offerings to this picture.\*

Aringhus, touching upon this subject, in his elaborate account of subterraneous Rome, observes, "that the images of the blessed Virgin shine out continually by new and daily miracles, to the comfort of their votaries, and the confusion of all gainsayers. Within these few years," says he, "under every pope successively, some or other of our sacred images, especially of the more ancient, have made themselves illustrious, and acquired a peculiar worship and veneration by the exhibition of fresh signs; as it is notorious

\* *La vie de St. Dominic*, p. 599, 4to. à Paris, 1647.

to all who dwell in this city. But how can I pass over in silence the image of St. Dominic ; so conspicuous at this day for its never-ceasing miracles ; which attract the resort and admiration of the whole Christian world. This picture, which, as pious tradition informs us, was brought down from heaven about the year of our redemption, 1530, is a most solid bulwark of the church of Christ, and a noble monument of the pure faith of Christians, against all the impious opposers of image worship. The venerable image is drawn indeed but rudely, without the help of art or pencil ; sketched out by a celestial hand ; with a book in its right, and a lily in its left hand : of a moderate stature, but of a grave and comely aspect ; with a robe reaching down to the heels. Those who have written its history assert, that the painters in their attempts to copy it, have not always been able to take similar copies ; because it frequently assumes a different air, and rays of light have been seen by some to issue from its countenance ; and it has more than once removed itself from one place to another. The worship therefore of this picture is become so famous through all Christendom, that multitudes of people, to the number of a hundred thousand and upwards, flock annually to pay their devotions to it, on the festival of the saint ; and though it be strange, which I have now related, yet what I am going to say is still stranger, that not only the original picture, made not by human, but by heavenly hands, is celebrated for its daily miracles, but even the copy



of it, which is piously preserved in this city, in the monastery called St. Mary's above the Minerva, is famous also in these our days for its perpetual signs and wonders, as the numberless votive offerings hanging around it, and the bracelets and jewels which adorn it testify." \*

All their apologists indeed declare, what our Catholic also says on this head, "that they do not ascribe these miracles to any power in the image itself, but to the power of God, who is moved to work them by the prayers and intercession of his saints, for the benefit of those who have sought that intercession before their pictures or images; and in order to bear testimony to the faith and practice of the church in this particular article."† But how can we think it possible that the Deity can be moved to exert his power so wonderfully for the confirmation of such ridiculous stories of pictures and statues sent down from heaven; which while they blasphemously impute to the workmanship of saints or angels, or of God himself,‡ are yet always so rudely and contemptibly performed, that a moderate artist on earth would be ashamed to call them his own? Or is it at all credible, that the saints in heaven should be as busy and ambitious as their votaries are on earth, to advance the peculiar honors of their several altars, by their continual intercessions at the throne of

\* Aring. Roma Subterranea. Tom. ii. p. 464. § 13.

† Cathol. Christ. p. 251.

‡ *Imaginem θεότευκτον.* Euagr.  
The God-made image.—[D.]



grace? Or that their whole care above, if they really have any, which reaches to things below, should be employed, not for the general advancement of religion and piety among men, but of their own private glory and worship, in preference to all their competitors? No; the absurdity of such notions and practices makes it necessary to believe that they were all occasionally forged for the support of some lucrative scheme; or to revive the expiring credit of some favorite superstition, which had been found highly beneficial to the contrivers of such forgeries. For the very effect, of which they boast, as a proof of the miracle, betrays the fraud; and the multitude of pilgrims and offerings, to which they appeal, instead of demonstrating the truth of the fact, does but expose the real ground of the imposture.

But to return to my antagonist: if we should ask him once more, whether there was ever a temple in the world not purely heathenish, in which there were any *images, erected on altars*, for the purpose of any religious worship whatsoever; he must be obliged to answer in the negative. He would be forced likewise to confess that there were many such temples in Pagan Rome, and particularly the Pantheon, which remains still in Christian Rome; on whose numerous altars as there formerly stood the images of as many Pagan divi or idols, so there are now standing the images of as many Popish divi or saints; to whom the present Romans pay their vows and offer prayers, as their inclinations sev-

erally lead them to this or that particular altar: and no man will pretend to say that there is not the greatest conformity between the present and the ancient temple; or that it would not be difficult to furnish out a private room more exactly to the taste of the old Romans, than this Popish church stands now adorned with all the furniture of their old Paganism.

We are informed by Plato, that there were images in the temples of Egypt from the earliest antiquity: \* and it appears evidently from Scripture that they subsisted there, as well as in Palestine, before the time of Moses. The strict prohibition of them therefore to the Jews, while several other rites of the heathens were indulged to them, in condescension to their peculiar circumstances and carnal affections, carries a strong intimation that images are of all things the most dangerous to true religion; as tending naturally to corrupt it, by introducing superstition and idolatry into the worship of God. The Christian emperors, as I have intimated in my letter, strictly prohibited their Pagan subjects to light up candles, offer incense, or hang up garlands to senseless images: for these were then reckoned the notorious acts of genuine Paganism? Yet we now see all these very acts performed every day in Popish countries to the images of the Popish saints.

In a word, since there never was an image in the temple of the true God, in any age of the world, yet a perpetual use of them in all the

\* Plat. de Legib. L. ii. p. 656.

temples of the heathens, it is in vain to dispute about their origin; the thing is evident to a demonstration; they must necessarily be derived to the present Romans, from those who always used, and not from those who always detested them; that is, from their Pagan, not their Christian ancestors. They may quibble therefore as long as they please; and talk of their decrees and canons, contrived to amuse the public, and elude the arguments of protestants, by subtle and specious distinctions; while every traveller who sees what passes at the shrine of any celebrated saint, or miraculous image in Italy, will be convinced by ocular demonstration, that their people are trained, instructed, and encouraged to believe, that there is a divinity or power residing in those images, and that they actually offer up prayers and put their trust in them.

For if there is no such belief amongst them, as this Catholic affirms, for what purpose do they expose those images so solemnly, and carry them about in procession, on all occasions of public distress? Is there any charm in a block of wood or stone, to produce rain, or avert a pestilence? Or, can senseless images have any influence towards moving the will of God? No; their priests are not so silly as to imagine it: the sole end of producing them is, *not to move God*, but *the populace*; to persuade the deluded multitude, that there is a power in the image, that can draw down blessings upon them from heaven: a doctrine that repays all their pains of inculcating it, by a *perpetual supply of wealth*

to the treasury of the church. This therefore, as it appears from undeniable facts, is the universal belief of all Popish countries; grounded, as they all assert, on the evidence of perpetual miracles, wrought by the particular agency of these sacred images, of which I could produce innumerable instances from their own books.

§ 8. *The miraculous picture of St. Mary.*—In a collegiate church of regular canons, called St. Mary, of Impruneta, about six miles from Florence, there is a miraculous picture of the Virgin Mary, painted by St. Luke, and held in the greatest veneration through all Tuscany: which, as oft as that state happens to be visited by any calamity, or involved in any peculiar danger, is sure to be brought out, and carried in procession through the streets of Florence; attended by the prince himself, with all the nobility, magistrates, and clergy; where it has never failed to afford them present relief in their greatest difficulties. In testimony of which they produce authentic acts and records, confirmed by public inscriptions, setting forth all the particular benefits miraculously obtained from each procession; and the several offerings made on that account to the sacred image, for many centuries past, down to these very times; from the notoriety of which facts it became a proverb over Italy, that “the Florentines had got a Madonna which did for them whatever they pleased.”\*

\* Passò in proverbio per tutta l'Italia; che i Fiorentini hanno una Madonna, che fa à lor modo. *Memorie Istoricke della Miracolosa Immagine*, &c. in Firen. 1714, 4to. p. 85.

Among the numerous inscriptions of this sort there is one in the church of Impruneta, to this effect: "That the sacred image being carried with solemn pomp into Florence, when it was visited by a pestilence for three years successively, and received with pious zeal by the great duke, Ferdinand II., and the whole body of the people, who came out to meet it, and having marched about the city for three days in procession, the fierceness of the pestilence began miraculously to abate, and soon after entirely ceased. Upon which the magistrates of health, by a general vow of the citizens, made an offering of ten thousand ducats of gold, to be employed for providing portions for twenty young women of Impruneta, to be disposed of annually in marriage, and placed that inscription as a monument of so signal a benefit, A. D. 1633."\*

During the time of these processions, they always inscribe certain hymns, or prayers, or eulogiums of the Virgin, over the doors and other conspicuous places of each church, where the image reposes itself for any time; in order to raise the devotion of the people towards the sacred object before them. In a procession made A. D. 1711, the following inscription was placed over the principal gate of one of their great churches—"The gate of celestial benefit. The gate of salvation. Look up to the Virgin herself. Pass into me all ye who desire me. Whosoever shall find me, will find life and draw salvation

\* *Memorie Istoriche della Miracolosa Immagine, &c.*, in Firen. 1714, 4to. p. 202.

from the Lord. For there is no one who can be saved, O most holy Virgin, but through thee. There is no one who can be delivered from evils, but through thee. There is no one from whom we can obtain mercy, but through thee." In the conclusion are these expressions,—“Mary indeed opens the bosom of her mercy to all; so that *the whole universe receives out of her fullness*. The captive, redemption; the sick, a cure; the sad, comfort; *the sinner, pardon*; the just, grace; the angel, joy; the whole Trinity, glory.”\*

Now what can we say of a devotion so extravagant and blasphemous, but that it is a revival of the old heresy of the Collyridians;† maintained by a sect of silly women; who fell into their foolish error or madness, as Epiphanius calls it, through an excess of zeal towards the blessed Virgin, whom they resolved to advance into a goddess, and to introduce the worship of her as such into the Christian church.‡

\* Janua cœlestis beneficii. Janua Salutis. Ipsam Virginem attendite. Transite ad me omnes qui concupiscitis me.—Qui me invenerit, inveniet vitam et hauriet salutem a Domino. Nemo enim est qui salvus fiat, O Sanctissima, nisi per Te. Nemo est qui liberetur a malis nisi per te. Nemo est cujus misereatur gratia nisi per te.

Maria profecto omnibus misericordiæ sinum aperit, ut de plenitudine ejus accipiant Universi. Captivus redemptionem, Æger curationem, Tristis consolationem, Peccator veniam, Justus gratiam, Angelus lætitiā, tota Trinitas gloriam. *Memorie Istoriche della Miracolosa Immagine, &c.*, in Firen. 1714, 4to. p. 234.

† *Collyridians*.—This sect, which arose in the fourth century, was so called from the cakes (*collyridæ*) which they offered in honor of the Virgin. See “*Dowling’s History of Romanism*,” p. 82.

‡ Epiph. adv. Hær. Vol. I. p. 1058. Edit. Par. 1622.



I cannot dismiss the story of this wonderful picture, without giving the reader some account of its origin, as it is delivered by their writers, not grounded, as they say, on vulgar fame, but on public records, and histories, confirmed by a perpetual series of miracles. "When the inhabitants of Impruneta had resolved to build a church to the Virgin, and were digging the foundations of it with great zeal, on a spot marked out to them by heaven; one of the laborers happened to strike his pickaxe against something under ground, from which there issued presently a complaining voice or groan. The workmen, being greatly amazed, put a stop to their work for a while, but having recovered their spirits after some pause, they ventured to open the place from which the voice came, and found the miraculous image."\*

This calls to my mind a Pagan story of the same stamp, and in the same country, preserved to us by Cicero, concerning the origin of divination. "That a man being at plough in a certain field of Etruria, and happening to strike his plough somewhat deeper than ordinary, there started up before him out of the furrow, a deity, whom they called Tages. The ploughman, terrified by so strange an apparition, made such an outcry that he alarmed all his neighbors, and in a short time drew the whole country around him; to whom the god, in the hearing of them all, explained the whole art and mystery of divination: which all their writers and records

\* Epiph. adv. Hær. Vol I. p. 53, &c.



affirmed, to be the genuine origin of that discipline, for which the old Tuscans were afterwards so famous."

Now these two stories forged at different times in the same country, and for the same end of supporting an idolatrous worship, bear such a resemblance to each other, that every one will see the one to have been a bungling imitation of the other; and we may say of the Popish Madonna, what Cicero says of the Pagan Tages, "that none can be so silly as to believe that a god was ever dug out of the ground; and that an attempt to confute such stories would be as silly as to believe them."\* My design therefore in collecting them was not so much to expose the folly of them to my protestant readers, as to admonish our papists, by unquestionable facts and instances, drawn from the present practice of Rome, into what a labyrinth of folly and impiety their principles will naturally lead them, when they are pushed to their full length, and exerted without reserve or restraint; and to lay before them the forgeries and impostures which are practised in their church, to support the absurd doctrines which she imposes, as the necessary terms of Catholic communion.

But their constant method of recurring to different saints in their different exigencies, is nothing else, as many writers have observed, but an exact copy of the Pagan superstition, grounded, on a popular belief, that their saints, like the old demons, have each their distinct provinces,

\* Cicero de Divin. ii. 23.

or præfectures, assigned to them; some over particular countries, cities, societies, and even the different trades of men; others over the several diseases of the body, or the mind; others over the winds, the rain, and various fruits of the earth.\* So that God's rebuke to the apostatizing Jews, is full as applicable to the papists, for committing whoredoms with their idols, and saying, "I will go after my lovers, who give me my bread and my water: my wool and my flax; mine oil and my drink—for they did not know that I gave them their corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied their silver and gold which they prepared for Baal."†

§ 9. *Images not defensible.*—Our Catholic proceeds to affirm that all the devotion paid to their saints extends no farther than to desire their prayers, and that the pictures and images of them, which we see in their churches, are no more than mere memorials, designed to express the esteem which they retain for the persons so represented; or as helps to raise their affections to heavenly things; and that every child amongst them knows this to be true. Yet I have demonstrated from their public inscriptions, as well as the explicit testimonies of their writers, that those images are placed by them in their churches, as the proper objects of religious adoration; and that they ascribe to their divi, or saints, who are represented by them, the very same titles, powers and attributes, which the

\* Orig. con. Cels. 8, p. 339.

† Hosea ii. 5, 7.

heathens ascribed to their deities; invoking them as tutelary divinities; as presiding over their temples, and the affairs of men, as most powerful, invincible, and always ready to help and relieve their votaries. All which is confirmed by the constant style of their prayers, and the express language of their liturgies, missals, and breviaries, set forth at Rome by public authority: in which the Virgin is called “the mother of mercy, hope of the world, the only trust of sinners;” and the saints addressed to under the titles of intercessors, protectors, and dispensers of grace. Maldonatus calls it “an impious and silly error of the protestants to think that no religious worship is due to any but to God.” And some of their expurgatory indexes go so far as to expunge all those passages of the primitive fathers which teach, that creatures ought not to be adored.\*

The Abbot de Marolles relates a conversation in which he was once engaged with a Capuchin, who had been employed in several missions, and a celebrated preacher of France; in the presence of a Hugonot gentleman; for whose sake the abbot took occasion to speak of images in the same moderate strain, in which our Catholic thinks fit to treat them in his present address to protestants; “that they were placed in their

\* *Salve Regina*; Mater misericordiæ, vita, dulcedo, et spes nostra, salve. Ad Te clamamus exules filii Evæ, &c. *Offic. Beat. Virg. Maldonat.* in Mat, v. 35. *Index Expurgat. Madrid*, 1612.

Hail, O queen! mother of mercy, our life, delight, and hope, hail! We cry to thee, exile children of Eve, &c.—[D.]

churches not for the people to adore, or put their trust in them, but to edify their senses, by the representation of holy things. But the abbot's discourse gave offence both to the friar and the preacher; they insisted on a higher degree of veneration, urged the stories of their miraculous images, and the extraordinary devotion that was paid by the Pope, the bishops, and the whole church, to some of them, which had been known to speak, or were brought down from heaven, or made by the hands of apostles and angels; or had been consecrated on the account of some particular virtues, and were carried for that reason in processions, and worshipped on altars, as well as the sacred relics; whose miracles could not be contested by any, but obstinate heretics, who would sooner renounce the testimony of their senses, than be convinced of their errors. In short, the Capuchin declared that the authority of the church was the sole rule of faith; and that to resist it was a manifest rebellion, and worthy of the last punishment."\* And this

\* Mais tout ce discours ne plut pas encore au Religieux, ni mesmes à M. Hersaut, qui vouloit quelque chose de plus; pour preuve de quoy, l'un et l'autre mirent en avant les images miraculeuses, et marquerent mesmes les respects extraordinaires, que le S. Pere, les Evesques, et toute l'Eglise rendent à quelques unes, qui ont parlé, ou qui sont descendues du Ciel, ou qui ont été façonnées de la propre main des Apostres, et des Anges, ou qui sont consacrées pour quelque vertu particuliere, lesquelles à cause de cela se portent en procession et sont reverreés sur les Autels, aussi bien que les saintes Reliques, dont les miracles ne peuvent estre contestez, que par les Heretiques opiniastres, qui combattent mesmes le tesmoignage des sens, quand il s'agit de la conviction de leur erreur.—Le Capucin estima, qu'il falloit defendre tout ce qui l'Eglise recoit;—que cela seul estoit la regle de la foy: et que ce seroit une rebellion

opinion after all, maintained by the friar, is the genuine notion of image worship, which prevails at this day in the Romish church, and especially in Italy, as I have fully demonstrated by the facts above recited.

I have said in my letter, that several of the ancient heroes were more worthy of veneration than some of the modern saints, who have dispossessed them of their shrines; and that I should sooner pay divine honors to the founders of empires than to the founders of monasteries. This our author aggravates into a heavy charge against me; as if I were offended to see the heathen temples converted into Christian churches, and had actually preferred the Pagan deities, before the martyrs of Christ. Where, according to his custom, he either widely mistakes, or wilfully misrepresents my meaning; for as to the genuine saints and martyrs of the Christian church, that is, all those who in past ages have lived agreeably to the rules of the gospel, or died in the defence of it, I reverence them as highly as they ought to be revered by any Christian, yet shall never be induced to worship them: I consider them as illustrious proofs of the excellence of the Christian doctrine; and shining examples of piety and fortitude to all succeeding ages. But as for the Popish saints, I believe several of them to be wholly fictitious; many more to have spent their lives contemptibly; and

manifeste d'y resister ce qui ne seroit digne de rien moins, que du dernier chastiment. *Memoires de M. de Marolles*, par. i. p. 164.

some of them even wickedly: and out of these three classes, let our author choose where he will; out of the fictitious, the contemptible, or the wicked; I shall venture to affirm once more, that I would sooner worship Romulus, or Antonine, than any of them: sooner pay my devotion to the founders, than to the disturbers of kingdoms; sooner to the benefactors, than to the persecutors of mankind; and this is the whole that I have ever meant.

§ 10. *Fictitious Saints*.—But our author calls it a notorious falsehood to say, “that many of their saints were never heard of but in their legends; or had no other merit but of throwing kingdoms into convulsions, for the sake of some gainful imposture:” yet I have produced several instances of the first sort, which every reasonable man must think decisive; in the case of Evodia, St. Viar, Amphibolus, Veronica: but no such saints, he says, were ever honored in their church: by which he means nothing more, as he himself explains it, than that they never were formally canonized, and entered into the Roman martyrology; which is nothing to the purpose; since, as I have shown from unquestionable authority, they were all honored with altars and images, and openly worshipped in Catholic countries, as saints and martyrs; and that Veronica in particular, though the name only of a picture, was advanced into a person, by the authority of pope Urban; and placed as such upon an altar, in the face of all Christendom, in St. Peter’s at Rome. Yet all men who know any thing of



history, either sacred or profane, must necessarily be convinced that the whole story, not only of the saint, but of the picture also, which they expose on certain festivals with the greatest pomp, and for the original of which different cities contend, is a mere cheat and forgery.

It is a thing confessed and lamented by the gravest of their own communion, that the names and worship of many pretended saints, who never had a real existence, had been fraudulently imposed upon the church. The celebrated Dr. John de Launoy was famous for clearing the calendar of several who had long been worshipped in France, as the tutelary saints of some of their principal towns: so that it used to be said of him, "that there never passed a year in which he did not pluck a saint out of paradise."\*

In the catacombs of Rome, which, in the times of heathenism was the burial place of the slaves, and poorer citizens, and where the bones of Pagans and Christians lie jumbled promiscuously together, if they happen to find a little vial or piece of glass tinged with red, at the mouth of any particular hole, they take it presently, (as the learned Montfaucon informs us,) for a certain proof of martyrdom; and, by the help of the next inscription, that they can pick up from some neighboring grave-stone, presently create a new saint and martyr to the Popish church. Mabillon, as I have observed, wishes "that they would be more scrupulous on this

\* Bayle Dict. in Launoy.



head; and not forge so many fabulous stories of saints, without any certain name; nor impose Paganish inscriptions for Christian upon the church."

Our Catholic himself, in this very work where he is laboring to give the most specious turn to every part of their worship, is forced to allow such a confusion and jumble among the martyrs and their relics, as approaches very nearly to what I am now affirming: he says, "that many of their saints having borne the same name, it easily happens that the relics, which belong to one, are attributed to another, and that there are many ancient martyrs, whose names at present are unknown, yet whose relics have all along been honored in the church; and that it was easy for the ignorance of some, or the vanity of others, to attribute to them the names of other saints." The old Athenians were called superstitious by the apostle, for erecting an altar to the unknown God; but our papists, we see, by their own confession, erect altars to unknown saints, and unknown relics.

Upon the mention of these relics, I cannot help observing, that the superstitious veneration and solemn translations of them, which make so great a part of the Popish worship, afford another instance of a practice clearly derived to them from Paganism; the whole process and ceremonial of which, as it is exercised at this day, may be seen in Plutarch's account of the translation of the bones of Theseus, from the Isle of Scyrus to Athens: and as this resolution was

first suggested to the Athenians by an apparition of Theseus himself, and enjoined to them afterwards by the Delphic oracle; so the discovery and translation of their relics in the Romish church, are usually grounded on some pretended vision or revelation from heaven.

“When Cimon then had conquered the Island of Scyrus, where Theseus died, being very solicitous, as Plutarch relates, to find out the place where he lay buried, and unable to procure any information about it, he happened to espy an eagle upon a rising ground, pecking the earth with its beak, and tearing it up with its talons; and conceiving this to be a divine omen and sign to him, he began immediately to dig, and found the coffin of a man of more than ordinary size, with a brazen lance and sword lying by him; all which he took away with him into his galley, and transported to Athens; where the whole body of the people, upon notice of his arrival, came out to receive the sacred relics in a solemn and pompous procession, performing public sacrifices and expressing all the same marks of joy, as if Theseus himself had been returning to them alive. They interred his bones in the midst of the city, where his sepulchre is still a sanctuary for slaves and the meaner citizens; Theseus having always been esteemed a particular patron of the poor and distressed. The chief festival, which they celebrate annually to his honor, is the eighth of October; on which he returned victorious from Crete with the young captives of Athens, yet they observe likewise

the eighth of every month as a kind of inferior holyday or memorial of him." \*

But to pursue the objections of our Catholic; he declares my account of St. Oreste, whose name I suppose to have been derived from the mountain Soracte on which his monastery now stands, to be ridiculous beyond measure; yet Mr. Addison, who was no ridiculous author, has related it as a certain fact; which he borrowed probably from some of their own writers, or at least from some of the antiquaries of Rome, among whom I heard the same story. But if the notion of fictitious saints be so notoriously false, as he asserts it to be, let him tell us, if he can, in what history we may find the acts of those very saints whom I have named, and whom their church adopts as genuine, St. Oreste, Baccho, Quirinus, Romula, and Redempta, Concordia, Nympha, Mercurius.

The creation of saints is become as common almost as the creation of cardinals; there having seldom been a Pope who did not add some to the calendar. Benedict XIII. canonized eight in one summer; and his successor, Clement XII., the last Pope, four more. During my stay at Rome, I saw the beatification of one Andrew Conti, of the family of the Pope, then reigning, Innocent XIII.; for this is another source of supplying fresh saints to the church; when to humor the ambition of the Pope, or the

\* Plutar. in Thes. ad fin. 'The English reader may find this story in the American (Baltimore) edition of Langhorne's translation of Plutarch's Lives, page 12.—[D.]

other princes of that communion, this honor is conferred on some of their name and family : and as there must be a testimony of miracles, wrought by every person so canonized or beatified, either when living or dead, so I was curious to inquire what miracles were ascribed to this beatified Andrew ; which I found to be nothing else but a few contemptible stories, delivered down by tradition, which showed only the weakness of the man, and the absurdity of believing that God should exert his omnipotence for the production of such trifles.

As to the proof of miracles, which is essential to these canonizations, every one will conceive how easy it must be, in a function contrived to serve the interest of the church and the ambition of its rulers, to procure such a testimonial of them as will be sufficient for the purpose. In the deifications of ancient Rome, the attestation also of a miracle was held necessary to the act. In the case of Romulus, one Julius Proculus, a man said to be of a worthy and upright character, took a solemn oath, "that Romulus himself appeared to him, and ordered him to inform the senate, of his being called up to the assembly of the gods, under the name of Quirinus ;"\* and in the deification of the Cæsars, a testimony upon oath of an eagle's flying out of the funeral pile, towards heaven, which was supposed to convey the soul of the deceased, was the established proof of their divinity. Now as these Pagan deifications are the only patterns in his-

\* Vid. Plutar. in vit. Romul. Dionys. Halicar. L. ii. p. 124.

tory for the Popish canonizations; so the invention of miracles is the single art in which modern Rome is allowed to excel the ancient.

§ 11. *St. Thomas a Becket*.—In the Jesuit's College at St. Omer's, the father, who showed us the house, happening to produce some relic, or memorial of St. Thomas, which he treated with much reverence, one of our company asked me what Thomas he meant? upon which I unwarily said, "it is Thomas Becket, who is worshipped as a great saint on this side of the water:" yes, sir, replied the Jesuit, with a severe look, "if there is any faith in history, he deserves to be esteemed a great saint." But I may venture to affirm in England, what I did not care to dispute in a college of Jesuits, that this celebrated Thomas had more of the rebel than of the saint in him; was a prelate of a most daring, turbulent, seditious spirit; inflexibly obstinate, insatiably ambitious, intolerably insolent; whose violence the Pope himself endeavored in vain to moderate; as it appears from such monuments as the Papists themselves must allow to be authentic, a collection of Becket's own letters, preserved still in the Vatican, and printed some years ago in Brussels.\* \*

From these letters, I say, it appears that not only the king, and the whole body of his barons, but even the bishops, abbots, and clergy, openly condemned his behaviour as highly rash and criminal; they charged him with being the sole "disturber of the peace of the kingdom; that

\* Epist. et Vit. Div. Thomæ. 2 vol. 4to. Bruxellis, 1682.

while he was making all that stir about the liberties of the church, he himself was the chief infringer of them; that he was not ashamed to publish the most notorious lies in favor of his own cause; that he refused to restore to the king forty thousand marks, which had been committed to him in trust; that he was guilty of the most detestable ingratitude to the king, whom he treated worse than a heathen or publican, though he had been raised by him from the lowest condition, to the highest favor, and entrusted by him with the command of all his dominions, and made his chancellor, and archbishop of Canterbury, contrary to the advice of his mother, the empress, and the remonstrances of the nobility; and to the great grief and mortification of the whole clergy:" all which the bishops and clergy of the realm expressly affirm in their common letters, not only to the Pope, but to Becket himself; accusing him likewise of "traitorous practices, and of using all endeavors to excite the king of France, and the court of Flanders, to enter into a war against his king and country."

When he was cited by the king to answer for his maladministration, before the bishops and barons of the realm, he absolutely refused to appear; declaring himself "responsible to none but God; and that as much as the soul was superior to the body, so much were all people obliged to obey him rather than the king, in all things relating to God and his church; who had established bishops to be the judges and fathers of themselves; and as neither law nor rea-



son allowed children to judge their parents, so he renounced the judgment of the king and the barons, and all other persons whatsoever, and acknowledged no judge but God and his sovereign vicar on earth, the Pope."\* Yet this man is now adored as one of the principal saints and martyrs of the Romish church; whose character I have chosen to insist upon the more particularly, as it will teach us by an illustrious example, from our own history, what kind of merit it is, that has exalted so many others in the same church, to the same honors.

Let our Catholic tell us also, if he pleases, what opinion his church entertains of Garnet the Jesuit, who was privy to the gunpowder plot, and hanged for his treason; if he dares to speak his mind, he will declare him to be a saint and martyr of Christ; for such he is held to be at Rome and St. Omer's: yet all protestants will rank him, I dare say, among those saints whom I justly call the disturbers of kingdoms; and who merited the honor of their saintship, not by spreading the light of the gospel, but scattering firebrands and destruction through the world.

§ 12. *Transubstantiation*.—Our author cannot comprehend why I should bring in the adoration of the host among the other articles of my charge; since, by my own confession, I find no resemblance of it in any part of the Pagan worship: but I have given a good reason for my not finding it there, which might have taught him also, why I brought it in; because it was

\* La vie de Saint Thom. Archevesque de Canterb. p. 129.



too absurd for the practice even of the heathens, who thought that none could ever be so mad as to make it a point of religion, to eat their God. This I showed from the authority of Tully ; whom I prefer therefore, he says, to the apostles and evangelists : as if those sacred writers had expressly declared the sacramental bread to be God ; which all protestants deny, in that gross and ridiculous sense, in which the Papists interpret them. But as it is not my present purpose to examine the real merit of Transubstantiation, so I shall take notice only of one argument that he alleges for it, which, if it has any force, must be allowed indeed to be conclusive ; that “the unerring authority of the church has declared it to be true, and enjoined the belief of it ;” and after such a decision, “that it is the part of an infidel, rather than a Christian, to ask how can this be ?”

This is the last resort of Popery ; the sum of all their reasoning ; to resolve all religion into an implicit faith, and a slavish obedience to the authority of the church ; which by innumerable texts of Scripture, says our author, is declared to be the indispensable duty of every Christian. We may spare ourselves then the pains of thinking and inquiring ; drop the perilous task of studying the Scriptures ; the church, like an indulgent mother, takes all that trouble upon herself ; warrants her doctrines to be divine ; and ensures our salvation, on the single condition of taking her word for it. But all protestants must see the horrible effects of such a principle ; an

Inquisition ready to satisfy all their doubts ; a prison and tortures prepared for those who dare to ask their priests, what Nicodemus asked our Saviour, how can these things be? Thus our Catholic, in mentioning the case of a protestant, converted to their faith, who may happen to be possessed still with some scruples, declares "that he has nothing to fear in conforming himself to the authority of the church, but very much, in making any scruple to hear and obey his spiritual guides."

In this doctrine of Transubstantiation we see a remarkable instance of the prolific nature of error ; and how one absurdity naturally begets another : for the first consequence of it was, to render one half of the sacramental institution superfluous, by denying the cup to the laity ; though our Saviour expressly commanded all his disciples to drink of it, and declared, that without drinking, they could have no life in them.\* Yet grant them their Transubstantiation, and the conclusion is natural, as our Catholic has deduced it ; "for whosoever," says he,

\* Matt. xxvi. 27. John vi. 53. 1 Cor. xi. 23.—In the passage cited by Dr. Middleton, from John vi. 53, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you," there is no reason to suppose that our Lord referred to the Supper, which was not then instituted. If he did, then the words would imply that a participation in the Lord's Supper was absolutely essential to salvation. The meaning unquestionably is, that without that faith in the sacrifice of Christ, which is represented under the significant figure of eating his flesh and drinking his blood, a person could have no spiritual life in him. The true believer's life is a life of faith upon the Son of God, who hath loved him and given himself for him.—[D.]

“receives the body of Christ, most certainly receives his blood at the same time, since the body which he receives is a living body, and cannot be without blood. There is no taking Christ by pieces ; whoever receives him, receives him whole ; and since he is as truly and really present in one kind as in both, he brings with him consequently the same grace, when received in one kind, as when received in both.” But if they were disposed to use their reason on this occasion, a conclusion, so contradictory to the express institution of the gospel, would convince them of the falsehood of those principles, by which they were led into it ; and oblige them to distrust their premises, which have always been disputed, rather than reject a clear precept of Christ, on which there never was, or can be any reasonable dispute.

As to my sixth and seventh instances of their Paganism, since our Catholic has offered nothing upon them worth the pains of considering, I shall refer the reader to my letter, without troubling him with any thing farther about them, and proceed to the more important article of their miracles.

§ 13. *Spurious Miracles*.—Here he begins to grow warm again, and declares, “that I am always offended with miracles, wherever I meet them ; and is sorry that I do not speak out in favor of my friends the freethinkers, and show the Jewish and Christian miracles to be no better than those of the Pagans.” This is the constant refuge of baffled zealots to throw the odium

of infidelity and free thinking on those who dare to expose their impostures. But he hoped perhaps to find some even of our own church ready to join with him in the cry; since he appears to be no stranger to the offence, which the freedom of this very letter had given to certain men, who are too apt to consider their own opinions as the standard of Christian faith; and to treat even the defenders of our religion as deserters, if they do not submit to act under their direction, and defend it by their principles. These men imagined that I had attacked the Popish miracles with a gayety that seemed to condemn all miracles, and particularly those of our Saviour; by invalidating the force of those rules which Mr. Leslie had established as the criterion of true miracles: whereas the truth of the matter is, as I have often declared it to my friends, that at the time of writing the letter I had never read Mr. Leslie's treatise, nor so much as knew what his rules were.

My only view was to expose the forgery of the Popish miracles in the strongest manner that I was able; and in spite of all the evidence, which they pretend to produce for them, to show that they stood upon no better ground than those of their Pagan ancestors. I had observed, not only from books, but from experience, what these cavillers perhaps were not so well apprized of, that the pretence of miracles was the grand support of the Romish church, and what gave a sanction to all their other frauds; that their constant appeal to a divine power, exerting itself

miraculously amongst them, gave them not only their chief advantage against protestants, but furnished the deists also with the most obvious arguments against revelation itself: for "these pious cheats," as Mr. Leslie says, "are the sorest disgraces of Christianity; which have bid the fairest of any one contrivance, to overturn the certainty of the miracles of Christ, and the whole truth of the gospel, by putting them all on the same foot."\* To destroy the authority therefore of these cheats, was to sap the foundation of Popery, and overturn the main pillar on which its power subsists: which was the real motive of my dwelling longer on this than on any other article, as our Catholic observes, as well as of treating it with that freedom which alarmed even some of our protestants.

That my sentiments therefore on this head may neither be mistaken, nor suspected; and that I may give satisfaction, as far as I am able, to all, whom, by any freedom of expression, I may possibly have offended, either in this, or in any other of my writings, I take this occasion to declare; that I look upon miracles, when accompanied with all the circumstances proper to persuade us of the reality of the facts said to be performed, and of the dignity of the end for which they were performed, to be the most decisive proofs that can be given, of the truth and divinity of any religion. This was evidently the case of the Jewish and of the Christian miracles; wrought in such a manner as could leave

\* See Leslie's *Short Method with the Deists*, p. 24.

no doubt upon the senses of those who were the witnesses of them; and for the noblest end, for which the Deity can be conceived to interpose himself; the universal good and salvation of man. For the Jewish and Christian dispensations are but different parts of one and the same scheme; mutually illustrating and confirming each other's authority: and from this view of them, in which they should always be considered, as necessarily connected, and dependent on each other, we see the weakness of that objection, commonly made to the Mosaic part, on the account of its being calculated for the use only of a peculiar people; whereas in truth, it was the beginning, or first opening of an universal system; which, from the time of Moses, was gradually manifested to the world by the successive missions of the prophets, till that fullness of time or coming of the Messiah, when life and immortality were brought to light by the gospel, or the chief good and happiness of man perfectly revealed to him.

That miracles have ever been thought the most authentic proofs of a divine mission, seems to be declared by the sense of all nations: since there never was a religion pretending to be divine, which did not support that pretension by an appeal to them: yet the innumerable forgeries of this sort, which have been imposed upon mankind in all ages, are so far from weakening the credibility of the Jewish and Christian miracles, that they strengthen it. For how could we account for a practice so universal, of forging



miracles for the support of false religions, if on some occasions they had not actually been wrought for the confirmation of a true one? Or how is it possible, that so many spurious copies should pass upon the world, without some genuine original, from which they were drawn; whose known existence and tried success might give an appearance of probability to the counterfeit? Now of all the miracles of antiquity, there are none that can pretend to the character of originals, but those of the Old and New Testament; which though the oldest by far, of all others, of which any monuments now remain in the world, have yet maintained their credit to this day, through the perpetual opposition and scrutiny of ages; whilst all the rival productions of fraud and craft have long ago been successively exploded, and sunk into utter contempt. An event that cannot reasonably be ascribed to any other cause but to the natural force and effect of truth, which, though defaced for a time by the wit, or depressed by the power of man, is sure still to triumph in the end, over all the false mimicry of art, and the vain efforts of human policy.

As to Mr. Leslie's rules of distinguishing the true from false miracles, I have lately perused and considered them; and whatever force they may be supposed to have, I would not advise an apologist for Christianity to trust his cause to that single issue. Mr. Leslie himself does not do it; but suggests several other arguments for the divinity of our religion, so strong and con-



clusive that even miracles themselves, as he declares, would not be sufficient to overrule them.\* His marks, however, are so far certainly good, that no pretence of miracles can deserve any attention without them; yet it does not necessarily follow that all the miracles in which they may be found, ought to be received as true; since as far as I have been able to observe, within the compass of my reading, several might be produced both from Popery and Paganism, which seem to possess them all, and are yet unquestionably false.

I have charged the Popish church in my letter with many instances of forged miracles, to which this author does not think fit to make any particular reply, but contents himself with a general answer, which must needs be thought curious: for he observes, that whether the miracles which I have pitched upon be true or false, there is nothing at least heathenish in them; and consequently nothing that shows the conformity, which I pretend to demonstrate, between Popery and Paganism. Which is in effect to say, that allowing them to be forged, yet they were not forged by Pagan, but by Christian priests; not for the purposes of Pagan, but of Christian superstition, so that I cannot with any propriety call them heathenish. But are they not all copied from the patterns of Paganism? Are they not applied to the same purposes of fraud and delusion; to keep their people in a slavish subjection to an idolatrous worship; and to ac-

\* See Leslie's Short method, p. 21.

quire wealth and power to the priesthood? This certainly is downright Paganism, and the most detestable part of it.

He proceeds however to assert with his usual gravity, "that God has been pleased in every age, to work most evident miracles in their church, by the ministry of his saints; in raising the dead to life; in curing the blind and the lame; in casting out devils; in healing inveterate diseases in a moment, attested by the most authentic monuments; which will be a standing evidence to all nations, that the church in which they are wrought, is not that idolatrous Pagan church which I pretend it to be, but the true spouse of Christ." This is the constant voice of all the Romish apologists; that the catholicism of their church is demonstrated by the notoriety of their miracles.\* But since the end of all miracles is to convert unbelievers; if their miracles be really wrought by the power of Christ, why are they not wrought, like the miracles of Christ, in open daylight; in the midst of unbelieving nations; not for the acquisition of gain or power to particular persons, but for the benevolent ends of conferring some general good, by reforming men's lives, enlightening their understandings, and promoting truth and peace and charity amongst men? Why are none of them wrought in protestant countries, for whose conversion

\* *Nostram Ecclesiam demonstrabimus esse veram Ecclesiam miraculis. Bellarm. de Eccles. Milit. L. iv. c. 14.*

"We will prove our church to be the true church by miracles." (*Cited from Cardinal Bellarmine.*)—[D.]

they are always alleged; but huddled over among their own bigoted votaries: prepared by an habitual credulity, to receive any imposture that their priests can invent?\*

While St. Thomas's shrine flourished at Canterbury, his saintship was demonstrated by perpetual miracles; in which, as the historians of those times tell us, he far outdid not only all other saints, but even our Saviour himself. There were two volumes of them preserved in the church of Canterbury; and another book in France, in which there was an account of two hundred and seventy. Peter of Blois, a celebrated writer of that age, after drawing a parallel between Thomas the apostle, and Thomas the martyr, says, "I do not pretend to compare a martyr with an apostle; for an apostle is greater;

\* M. de Marolles takes occasion to observe, from a fact which happened in Paris, 1644, how easily people, possessed with a superstitious regard to miracles, can persuade themselves that they see what in truth has no existence. The story is this: a certain man, out of a mere whim, or with design perhaps to try his pistol, shot it off against a sign in the street, on which the Virgin Mary was painted. The neighborhood being alarmed, ran out to see what was the matter; and observing the Virgin to be pierced through with the bullet, conceived it to be done by some heretic or blasphemer, in open defiance of their religion, and amazed at so daring an impiety, fancied that they saw drops of blood issue from the wound: of which the whole multitude was so strongly convinced, that there were thousands ready to depose that they had seen it with their own eyes: the story became famous, and a copper-plate of it was printed; till being ridiculed by men of sense, and found to be wholly imaginary, the copper-plate was ordered to be suppressed, and the miracle fell gradually into contempt. But if it had not happened in a country where the protestants at that time were very numerous, it might have been stamped perhaps for as genuine a miracle as many others of the same coinage, which I have taken notice of in the present work.

but it is glorious for us to have a martyr, who bears the name of an apostle, and who equals or surpasses him in his miracles.\* That great apostle cannot take it amiss that the Holy Spirit should enable others to work greater wonders, and in greater number than him: since the Lord both of the apostles and martyrs is content to be outdone by them himself in this particular: ye shall do, says he, not only these works, that I do; but greater works than these shall ye do.”† Which prediction, as they declare, was literally

\* John of Salisbury, who lived at the time, with a great reputation of learning and integrity, and wrote Becket's life, whose friend and disciple he was, speaking of the place and manner of his burial, says, “Where to the glory of God many and great miracles are now wrought by him, the people flocking thither in crowds, that they may see in others, and feel also in themselves, the power and mercy of him, who is ever wonderful and glorious in his saints. For in the place on which he suffered, and where his body likewise was deposited that night before the great altar; and also where he was at last buried, the paralytic are healed; the blind see; the deaf hear; the dumb speak; the lame walk; the devils are cast out; all who are sick of fevers, or other diseases, are cured; and what was never heard of in the days of our fathers, the dead are raised. *See Vit. S. Thomæ Epistolæ præfix.* Vol. i. 142.”

Pope Alexander, the third of that name, in a letter to the church of Canterbury upon the subject of Thomas's canonization, about four years after his death, says,—the whole body of the faithful must necessarily rejoice to hear of the wonderful works of the holy and reverend man Thomas, your late archbishop. But you must needs be filled with a more exalted joy, who behold his miracles with your own eyes, and whose church has the peculiar honor of possessing his most sacred remains. We on our part having considered the glory of his merits, by which his life was made so illustrious, and having received full and certain information of his miracles, not only from common fame, but from the testimony of our beloved sons, Albertus and Theodinus, cardinal priests and apostolic legats, and of a great number of other persons, have solemnly canonized the aforesaid archbishop, &c. *Ib.* p. 170.

† John xiv. 12.

fulfilled by St. Thomas: "Whose blood being collected with care immediately after his death, not only cured all distempers, but raised even great numbers of the dead to life: and when the quantity was found insufficient for the demand that was made of it, they were forced to supply it with water; the least drop of which, when tinged with the martyr's blood, and administered to the sick, or infused into the mouths of the dead, had all the same effects; so that it was sent abroad into all parts of the Christian world as an infallible cure for all kinds of diseases."\*

The fame of these miracles drew kings and princes from abroad; and infinite crowds at home, with daily offerings to his shrine: but this harvest was no sooner over, than *the power of the saint fell with the gain of the priest*; and all his miracles ceased, when the honor of his altar stood most in need of their support; so that the place where he was formerly worshipped, and where such mighty wonders were once wrought, is now shown as a monument only of the folly and superstition of our ancestors. But though he works no miracles in England, where his bones lie deposited; he works them still in foreign countries, and will continue to do so, as long as there is a Popish church and a priesthood, who find their interest in supporting them. For, as Lactantius justly observes, "among those who seek power and gain from their religion, there will never be wanting an inclination to forge and to lie for it."†

\* La vie de St. Thomas, p. 442, 4to. † Lactan. de fals. relig. i. 4.

They tell us indeed of many miracles of the greatest kind, wrought by their missionaries in India : but they all rest upon no other authority than the suspected relations of those missionaries ; and are even contradicted by some of their gravest writers. A royal professor of Salamanca, in one of his public lectures, says, " it does not appear to me, that the Christian faith has been propounded to the Indians in such a manner as would reasonably induce them to receive it ; for I hear of no miracles performed amongst them, nor of such examples of the Christian life as there ought to be ; but on the contrary, of much scandal and impiety." Another learned Jesuit, who had spent many years among the Indians, in a treatise on the method of converting them, says, " What signifies all our preaching ? What stress can we lay upon it ? We work no miracles."\*

But among all the boasted miracles of these missionaries, they have never so much as pretended to *the gift of tongues* ; which is the first thing necessary to the conversion of barbarous nations ; and without which all their preaching, and even miracles themselves would be useless. Yet St. Xaverius himself, the apostle of the Indies, and one of their great saints and workers of miracles, laments, in several of his letters, the insuperable difficulties which he had to struggle with in his mission, and his incapacity of doing any good in those countries, for the want of this gift. And in Japan particularly, where, accord-

\* Hospinian de Origin. Jesuitar. p. 230.



ing to his account a plentiful harvest was open to him, and great numbers disposed to become Christians; "God grant," says he, "that I may soon learn their language, so as to be able to explain things divine, and do some service at last to the Christian cause. For at present indeed, I am nothing better than a statue among them; and while they are talking and inquiring many things about me, am quite dumb through my ignorance of their tongue: but I am now acting the boy again in learning the elements of it."\*

Sir Thomas Roe, in a letter to the archbishop of Canterbury from the court of the great Mogul, relates a fact very applicable to our present subject; "that the Jesuit's house and church in that country happening to be burnt, the crucifix remained untouched, which was given out as a miracle. The king called for the Jesuit, and questioned him about it; but he answered ambiguously. The king then asked, whether he did not desire to convert him; and being answered in the affirmative, replied, You speak of your great miracles, and of many done in the name of your Prophet; if you will cast the crucifix into a fire before me, and it does not burn, I will become a Christian. The Jesuit refused

\* Itaque cum neque illi meam, neque ego illorum linguam intelligerem, &c. *Xaverii. Epist.* L. v. Sane laboriosum est, eorum, quibuscum verseris, funditus ignorare sermonem. *Ib.* i. 14. Faxit Deus, ut ad divinarum explicationem rerum, Japonicam linguam condiscamus quam primum. Tum demum aliquam Christianæ rei navabimus operam. Nam nunc quidem inter eos tanquam mutæ quædam statux versamur, &c. *Ib.* L. iii. 5.



the trial as unjust ; answering that God was not tied to the call of man ; that it was a sin to tempt him ; and that he wrought miracles according to his own will ; yet he offered to cast himself into the fire, as a proof of his own faith, which the king would not allow. Upon this, there arose a great dispute, begun by the Prince ; a stiff Mahometan, and hater of Christians ; who urged that it was reasonable to try our religion after this manner ; but withal, that if the crucifix did burn, then the Jesuit should be obliged to turn Moor. He alleged examples also of miracles said to be wrought for less purposes than the conversion of so mighty a king ; and spoke scornfully of Jesus Christ." Yet nothing could move the Jesuit to expose the authority of his religion to the hazard of so dangerous a trial.\*

But as in the case of all beneficial impostures, the security of the managers is apt to push them at last to an extravagance that betrays the whole cheat, so it has happened in the affair of the Popish miracles ; which have been carried to such a height of impudence and absurdity as renders them wholly contemptible ; while all their greater saints, and especially the founders of the monastic orders, St. Francis, St. Dominic, &c., are preferred, not only to the apostles, but to Christ himself, for the number and importance of their miracles ; many of which are authorized by the bulls of Popes, condemning all as heretics who do not believe them : though they are all pre-

\* See Collection of Travels published by Churchill, p. 805, 806.

tended to be wrought for no other end but the propagation of enthusiasm and monkery, and the confirmation of certain doctrines and rites, which are not only useless, but apparently hurtful to mankind.

If any such miracles therefore were ever wrought, of which there is the greatest reason to doubt, we must necessarily ascribe them to the power of the devil; endeavoring by such delusions to draw men away from the worship of the true God. This we are warranted to think probable, by the principles of our religion, and the authority of the primitive fathers; who exhort us on all such occasions to try the miracles by their end and tendency, and the nature of that doctrine which is proposed to be established by them: for though miracles carry the strongest presumption, as I have said, of the divinity of a doctrine in whose favor they are alleged, yet they are intended chiefly to rouse the attention of the world to the preacher or prophet who pretends to perform them, that his commission may be openly examined, whether it be of God or not.

The Jesuit Maldonatus, in his Comment on Matt. vii. 22, observes, "That St. Chrysostom, Jerom, Euthemius, Theophylact, prove by several instances, that real miracles had been performed by those who were not Catholic Christians." St. Chrysostom declares, "that miracles are proper only to excite sluggish and vulgar minds; that men of sense have no occasion for them; and that they frequently carry some un-

toward suspicion along with them.”\* “We are to take notice,” says St. Jerom, “that some are said to have the gifts of the Spirit who do not hold the truth of the gospel, which may serve to silence those heretics, who if they can but work a miracle, fancy presently that they have demonstrated the truth of their faith.”† “If miracles,” says St. Austin, “are wrought in the Catholic church, its catholicism is not thereby manifested, because miracles are wrought in it; but the miracles themselves are to be received because they are wrought in a church that is Catholic.” And Theodoret tells us, “that we are commanded not to give credit to them, when the performers of them teach things contrary to true piety.”‡

If agreeably then to the injunctions of the apostles and primitive fathers, we sit down to examine the pretended miracles of Rome, we shall find them always the most numerous, and the most confidently attested, in proportion to the absurdity of the doctrine or practice in whose favor they are alleged; as in the case of transubstantiation, purgatory, the worship of images, relics, crucifixes, indulgences, and all the tricks of monkery; as if miracles were of no other use but to subvert the reason and senses of mankind and confound all the distinctions between right and wrong: but if there be any rule of judging of their reality, or any power in man to discern truth from falsehood, we must necessarily con-

\* Vide Chrysost. Oper. Edit. Benedict. T. v. 271; a. 376; b. T. viii. 296; a. 205, 455.

† Vid. Hieron. in Galat. iii. Oper. T. iv. p. 251. Edit. Bened.

‡ Vid. Hospin. de doctrina Jesuit. p. 388.

clude, from the nature and end of the Popish miracles, that whatever testimonies may be brought to support them, they were all, without exception, either wrought by wicked spirits, or forged by wicked men.

§ 14. *Conclusion.*—I have now run through every thing that seemed worthy of any notice in my adversary's preface ; where I have the satisfaction to observe, that though he accuses me so freely of slander and falsehood, yet he has not denied so much as one of the numerous facts on which I ground my charge of their Paganism. It was upon the strength of these facts, that I first offered my letter to the judgment of the public, and the favorable reception which it has met with shows that it is not thought trifling, and foreign to the purpose, as he affirms it to be ; but pertinent and decisive of the question which it professes to illustrate. It is a folly therefore to attack the credit of it, till he comes prepared to overthrow the facts on which it is built ; for while these are allowed to be firm, the inference is undeniable, "that Popery has borrowed its principal ceremonies and doctrines from the rituals of Paganism."

The truth of this charge is so evident to all, who know any thing of antiquity, that though a missionary, as we may imagine, would be glad to conceal it even from Papists, and much more from Protestants, whom he is endeavoring to convert, yet all their own writers, who have any candor and learning, make no scruple to acknowledge it. M. de Marolles informs us how

he once surprised a great archbishop of France, by a frank declaration of it: which he afterwards demonstrated to him at large, by a particular deduction of it through many of the same instances on which I have insisted in my letter.\* The learned Du Choul also thus concludes his book on the religion of the old Romans: "If we consider the case attentively, we shall find very many institutions of our religion to have been borrowed from the ceremonies of the Egyptians and the Gentiles—all which our priests now make use of in our mysteries, by referring to the only true God, Jesus Christ, what the ignorance, false religion, and senseless superstition of the Pagans had applied to their gods, and to mortal men after their consecration."†

Our Catholic however concludes his work in a very different style: and in a kind of triumph for an imagined victory, undertakes by my own way of reasoning, to demonstrate the same conformity between the English and Roman church which I have attempted to show between Popery and Paganism; from the number of observances which our church still retains from the old religion of Rome: in consequence of which, he says, "if my argument be right, our Protestancy at last will be found to be nothing better than heathenish idolatry." But if we recollect the definition which I have given above, of Popery, the question will be reduced to a short issue; by considering only whether any of those particu-

\* *Memoires de Marolles*, par. ii. p. 209.

† *De religione Veter. Romanor. ad fin.*

lars which prove their religion to be Paganish, are retained still in ours ; whether we have any incense, holy water, or lamps in our churches ; any votive offerings hanging round our pillars ; any miraculous images ; any adoration of saints ; any altars in the streets, the waysides, and tops of hills ; any processions ; miracles, or monkery amongst us : if after all our reformation, we retain any of these, we are so far undoubtedly as criminal as they ; but if none of them can be found upon us, we are clear at least from all that Pagan idolatry which glares out so manifestly from every part of the Popish worship.

All that he can object to us on this head, amounts to no more than this : “ that there are several observances retained in our sacred offices which we use in common with the church of Rome.” We own it : but take them all to be such as we may retain with innocence. We profess to retain all that is truly Christian ; all that is enjoined by the gospel, or by just inference deducible from it. But if besides all this, they can discover any thing amongst us that they can claim as their own, or that may properly be called Popish ; I should willingly resign it to them ; and consent to any expedient that may remove us farther still from Popery, and unite us more closely with all sober Protestants. But whether any thing of this sort be remaining in our present establishment ; or how far any of the instances which he declares to have been borrowed from Rome, may want a review or farther reformation, as it is not the part of a pri-



vate man to determine, so I shall refer it, as I ought, to the judgment of my superiors. But it is high time to put an end to the reader's trouble, to which I shall beg leave only to add the following anonymous letter, which has some relation to my present subject, and was sent to me by the post, while I was employed on the life of Cicero.

"SIR,—You are desired by one of your subscribers, instead of amusing yourself with writing the life of Cicero, to answer the Catholic Christian, written (as the author declares) in answer to, and in order to show your false reasonings in your comparison of the Popish and Pagan ceremonies of religion—this Catholic Christian abuses the Protestant religion, taxes its divines with false translations and quotations out of Scripture, which he pretends they do not understand, or misapply, to make out their own heretical doctrines. Such scandalous reproaches brought upon yourself, and also upon the Protestant religion by your writings, make it incumbent on you to wipe off these stains, which by your means are contracted, before you enter upon any other subject.

"I am yours, &c."

"P. S. It had been honester and fairer to have answered the book, than to have complained to the bishop of London against the printer and got him put into prison."

I do not know how far my unknown correspondent will think himself obliged to me for



performing the task that he prescribes, of defending my letter from Rome, from the cavils of the Catholic Christian: I am in hopes, however, that my pains may be of some use, as well to admonish all serious Papists of the fraud and foppery of their own worship, as to deter Protestants from running over to a church so notoriously corrupt and heathenish. As to the charge intimated in the postscript, of procuring the imprisonment of the printer, instead of answering the author, it would have left indeed a just reproach upon me, if there had been any truth in it; but if any man has been imprisoned, or put to any trouble, on the account of that book, I declare that I am an utter stranger to it; that I have not the honor to be known to the bishop of London; and that no personal provocation whatsoever could induce me to desire the imprisonment of any man for the sake of his religion.

My aversion to Popery is grounded, not only on its Paganism and idolatry, but on its being *calculated for the support of* DESPOTIC POWER, and inconsistent with the genius of a free government. This I take to be its real character; which I do not however extend to the particular professors of it; many of whom I know to be men of great probity, politeness, and humanity; who through the prejudice of education, do not either see the consequences of what they are trained to profess, or through a mistaken point of honor, think it a duty to adhere to the religion of their ancestors. With these I can live, not only in charity, but in friendship; without the

least inclination to offend them any farther, than by obstructing all endeavors to introduce a religion amongst us which would necessarily be ruinous to the liberty of our country. Thus much I thought myself obliged to say upon the occasion of the foregoing letter, that while the Papists look upon me as an enemy, they may consider me at least as a fair one; an enemy to the idolatrous and slavish principles of their church; but free from all prejudice or enmity to their persons.



## APPENDIX A.—PAGE 97.

### ST. JANUARIUS AND THE FRENCH GENERAL.

AN amusing circumstance occurred in connection with this pretended miracle of the melting of the blood of St. Januarius, at the time of the invasion of Italy by the troops of Napoleon Bonaparte.

In order to excite the populace of Naples against the French, the Popish priests, through the medium of the confessional, and in other ways, had contrived to circulate the impression among the people, that St. Januarius was incensed against the foreign invaders, and that the phial of blood would show the anger of the Saint, by refusing to liquify. On the appointed day, the blood was exposed as on former occasions to the adoration of the multitude, but true to the predictions of the priests, the Saint was angry, and the blood remained congealed. The superstitious multitude, unsuspecting of the imposture practised on them by their priests, and deprived of their expected miracle, were upon the point of rising *en masse* upon the impious French, who had so deeply offended their Saint.

The French commander, hereupon, planted cannon before the church of St. Januarius, and troops of soldiers in the principal streets. Having stationed cannoneers, with lighted matches ready to fire them at the word of command, he then issued a special order to the priests in charge of the miraculous phial of blood, that if in TEN MINUTES the Saint did not repent of his obstinacy, and perform his usual miracle, the church should be fired upon, and the city should be reduced to ruins.

It was a critical moment. Five minutes of the precious ten had passed away, and the Saint yet continued obstinate. The cannoneers were just ready to advance with their matches, the multitude were looking on in anxious expectation, when (*mirabile dictu!*) the Saint relented just in time, and the blood was seen to melt! The multitude rent the air with their shouts. The church, the image, and the blood of the Saint were spared for future exhibitions; and the priests returned to their homes mortified and chagrined at having, at least once in their lives, been compelled to perform their well-practised jugglery in spite of themselves.

## APPENDIX B.—PAGE 107.

RESEMBLANCE BETWEEN MODERN PAGANISM AND POPERY.

BY REV. EUGENIO KINCAID.

The following striking parallel between the system of modern Paganism which prevails in the Burman Empire, called Bhoodism, and Popery, was communicated to the editor by the Rev. Eugenio Kincaid, for thirteen years a most useful and successful missionary in Burmah, in reply to a letter of inquiry on this subject.

“DEAR BRO. DOWLING—In answer to your letter making inquiries relative to the resemblances which I had observed between Bhoodism and Popery, while laboring as a missionary in Burmah, I would reply as follows :

“Bhoodism prevails over all Burmah, Siam, the Shan Principalities, and about one-third of the Chinese empire. Gaudama was the last Bhood, or the last manifestation of Bhood, and his relics and images are the objects of supreme adoration over all Bhoodist countries. In passing through the great cities of Burmah, the traveller is struck with the number and grandeur of the temples, pagodas and monasteries, as also with the number of idols and shaven-headed priests.

*Worship of images, relics, and saints.\**—"Pagodas are solid structures of masonry, and are worshipped because within their bare walls are deposited *images* or *relics* of Gaudama. The temples are dedicated to the worship of Gaudama; in them thrones are erected, on which massy images of Gaudama are placed; in some of the larger temples are the images of five hundred primitive disciples who were *canonized* about the time or soon after the death of Gaudama.

*Bhoodist monasteries.*—"The monasteries are the abode of the priests, and the depositories of the sacred volumes, with their endless *scholia* and commentaries. These monasteries are the schools and colleges of the empire. They are open to all the boys of the kingdom, rich and poor. No provision is made for the education of girls.

*Bhoodist monks with shaven heads.—Vow of celibacy, &c.*—"Priests are monks, as monasticism is universal; they take the vow of poverty and celibacy—their heads shaved and without turbans, and, dressed in robes of yellow cloth, they retire from society, or, in the language of their order, *retire to the wilderness*. Henceforth, they are always addressed as *lords* or *saints*, and over the entire population they exert a despotic influence. Priests, dead and alive, are worshipped the same as idols

\* These titles in *italics*, by which the various parts of the article are distinguished, have been added to Mr. Kincaid's letter by the editor.



and pagodas, because they are saints, and have extraordinary merit.

*Bhoo-dist rosaries. Prayers in an unknown tongue.*—“All devout Bhoo-dists, whether priests or people, male or female, use *a string of beads*, or *rosary*, in the recitation of their prayers—and their prayers are in *the unknown tongue*, called Pali, a language that has ceased to be spoken for many hundred years, and was never the vernacular of Burmah.

*Acts of merit.*—“The frequent repetition of prayers with the rosary, fasting, and making offerings to the images are meritorious deeds. Celibacy and voluntary poverty is regarded as evidence of the most exalted piety. To build temples, pagodas and monasteries, and purchase idols, are meritorious acts.

*Burning of wax candles in the daytime.*—“The burning of wax tapers and candles of various colors, both day and night, around the shrines of Gaudama, is universal in Bhoo-dist countries, and is taught as highly meritorious. Social prayer is unknown—each one prays apart, and making various prostrations before the images, deposits upon the altar offerings of fruit and flowers.

*The Bhoo-dist Lent.—Priests confessing each other.*—“The priests are required to fast every day after the sun has passed the meridian till the next morning. Besides this, there is a great fast once a year, continuing four or five weeks, in which all the peo-

ple are supposed to live entirely on vegetables and fruits. During this great fast, the priests retire from their monasteries, and live in temporary booths or tents, and are supposed to give themselves more exclusively to an ascetic life. At a certain time in the year, the priests have a practice of *confessing and exorcising each other*. This takes place in a small building erected for the purpose over running water.

*The Bhoodist priesthood and Pope.*—"There are various grades of rank in the priesthood, and the most unequivocal submission in the lower to the higher orders is required. *Tha-tha-na-bing* is the title of the priest who sits on the highest ecclesiastical throne in the empire (and thus corresponds to the *Pope* among Romanists). He is *Primate*, or *Lord Archbishop of the realm*—receives his appointment from the King; and from the *Tha-tha-na-bing* (or *Pope*) emanate all other ecclesiastical appointments in the kingdom, and its tributary principalities. He lives in a monastery built and furnished by the King, which is as splendid as gold and silver can make it.

*Bhoodist defences against idolatry the same as the excuses of Romanists for the worship of images.*—"I should observe that intelligent, learned Bhoodists (like some Romanists) deny that they *worship* the images and relics of Gaudama, but only *venerate* them as objects that remind them of Gaudama, the

only object of supreme adoration—but the number of Bhoodists who make this distinction is very small.

*Striking resemblance between the worship of a Bhoodist temple and a Roman Catholic cathedral.*—

“Often, when standing in a great Burman temple, and looking round upon a thousand worshippers *prostrating themselves before images*, surrounded by *wax candles*, uttering prayers in a dead language, each one with a *rosary* in hand, and the *priests* with *long, flowing robes* and *shaven heads*, I have thought of what I have witnessed in the Roman Catholic Cathedral in Montreal, and it has required but a very small stretch of the imagination to suppose myself transported to the opposite side of the globe, looking not upon the ceremonies of an acknowledged heathen temple, but upon the Christianized heathenism of Rome.

“The above are the points of resemblance between Bhoodism and Popery, which have struck my own mind the most powerfully. A pressure of engagements must be my apology for the brief, and I fear imperfect manner in which I have endeavored to comply with your request. Wishing you abundant success in your efforts to advance the interests of Bible truth and genuine Protestantism,

“I remain

“Yours in gospel bonds,

“EUGENIO KINCAID.”

## APPENDIX C.—PAGE 109.

### TEMPORIZING POLICY OF THE JESUIT MISSIONARIES IN CHINA.

IN relation to this *principle of accommodation*, referred to by Dr. Middleton, as adopted by the Jesuits in their missions to the heathen, the following two extracts may not be unacceptable to the reader. The first is from a recent valuable little work on the Jesuits, by the Rev. R. W. Overbury, minister of Eagle-street Chapel, London. The second from an able article in the *Christian Review* for June, 1841, on "The Jesuits as a Missionary Order," from the pen of one of the profoundest scholars and most eloquent writers of the present day.

"The Jesuits," says Mr. Overbury, "at a very early period established missions in the Celestial Empire. It was whilst projecting this mission that Francis Xavier fell ill and died. In reply to those who represented to him the difficulties of the undertaking, he had said: 'I am chosen for so high an enterprise by the special favor of heaven. \* \* \* The die is cast, I wish to go to China, and nothing can change my design. Were all hell let loose, I would scorn it, provided heaven were favorable to me.' At this time, however, some untoward events took place, which threw him into a fever, of which he died in fifteen days, in the forty-sixth year of his

age, having spent the last ten years in his Indian expedition.

“What Xavier thus vainly designed, was attempted by other hands. To give ever so brief a sketch of the Jesuit missions in China, would occupy too much time. The following letter, however, from the Roman Catholic Bishop Palafox to Pope Innocent X., dated January 8th, 1649, may be relied on as giving a just representation of the proceedings of the Jesuits in that country. ‘The whole church,’ says he, ‘publicly laments that it has been rather seduced than edified in China, by what the Jesuits have taught respecting the faith. *They have kept the cross out of sight*, and authorized customs absolutely Pagan. Instead of Christianizing idolaters, they have heathenized Christians; they have united God and Belial at the same table, in the same temple, at the same altar, and in the same sacrifices. In fact, idols are worshipped in that nation under the mask of Christianity, or rather the purity of our holy faith is polluted under the mask of idolatry. They have not only permitted the new converts to frequent the temples where idols are adored, but to take part in the abominable sacrifices which are offered to them; nay, they themselves offer sacrifices to the idols, prostrate themselves before them, present incense to them, and erect the cross on the same temple as Dagon,—such rites being evaded by a pretext of the Jesuits, directing the inward attention of the worshipper to a cross which is carried in secret, at the same time that their exterior worship is offered to the idol.’ No ecclesiastical order ever deviated so widely from the principles of the Christian religion. Instead of teaching the new converts, as they ought, the new converts have in-

veigled their teachers into idolatry, and have induced them to embrace a worship and customs that are detestable ; so that the fish has not been taken by the angler, but the angler has been caught by the fish. ‘As I am nearer to this people,’ (the Chinese,) says the Bishop, ‘than any other prelate ; as I have not only received letters from their instructors, but am acquainted with all the facts of the case, and am in possession of all the documents that have appeared upon it, and as in the character of bishop, God has called me to the government of his church, I should have cause to tremble at the awful day of judgment, if having his spiritual sheep committed to my care, I had not represented to your highness how many scandals are occasioned by this doctrine of the Jesuits in places where the true faith alone should be propagated.’ ” \*

“Another remarkable feature in the Jesuit order, illustrated in the history of all their missions,” says the writer in the *Christian Review*, “was their fatal *principle of accommodation*,—one in the use of which they alternately triumphed and fell. The gospel is to be presented with no needless offence given to the prejudices and habits of the heathen, but the gospel itself is never to be mutilated or disguised ; nor is the ministry ever to stoop to compliances in themselves sinful. The Jesuit mistook or forgot this. From a very early period, the order were famed for the art with which they studied to accommodate themselves and their religion to the tastes of the nation they would evangelize. Ricci, on entering China, found the bonzes, the priests of

\* The Jesuits, by R. W. Overbury, page 135, &c. London : Houlston & Stoneman. 1846.

the nation ; and to secure respect, himself and his associates adopted the habits and dress of the bonzes. But a short acquaintance with the empire taught him, that the whole class of the priesthood was in China a despised one, and that he had been only attracting gratuitous odium in assuming their garb. He therefore relinquished it again, to take that of the men of letters. In India, some of their number adopted the Braminical dress, and others conformed to the disgusting habits of the Fakeer and the Yogee, the hermits and penitents of the Mohammedan and Hindoo superstition. Swartz met a Catholic missionary, arrayed in the style of the Pagan priests, wearing their yellow robe, and having like them a drum beaten before him. It would seem, upon such principles of action, as if their next step ought to have been the creation of a Christian Juggernaut ; or to have arranged the Christian suttee, where the widow might burn according to the forms of the Romish breviary ; or to have organized a band of Romanist Thugs, strangling in the name of the Virgin, as did their Hindoo brethren for the honor of Kalee.

“ In South America, one of the zealous Jesuit fathers, finding that the Payernes, as the sorcerers and priests of the tribe were called, were accustomed to dance and sing in giving their religious instructions, put his preachments into metre, and copied the movements of these Pagan priests, that he might win the savage by the forms to which he had been accustomed. In China, again, they found the worship of deceased ancestors generally prevailing. Failing to supplant the practice, they proceeded to legitimate it. They even allowed worship to be paid to Confucius, the atheistical philosopher of China, provided



their converts would, in offering the worship, *conceal upon the altar a crucifix to which their homage should be secretly directed*. Finding the adoration of a crucified Saviour unpopular among that self-sufficient people, they are accused by their own Romanist brethren of having suppressed in their teachings the mystery of the cross, and preached Christ glorified, but not Christ in his humiliation, his agony, and his death. A more arrogant act than this the wisdom of this world has seldom perpetrated, when it has undertaken to modify and adorn the gospel of the crucified Nazarene.

“But to Robert de Nobilibus, the nephew of Bel-larmine, and the near kinsman of one of the pontiffs, a man of distinguished talent and zeal, laboring in India, it was reserved to exhibit one of the worst instances of this fatal spirit. Finding the Bramins in possession of the spiritual power, he published abroad that the Bramins of Rome were the kindred, but the seniors and the superiors of those of India. Enmity may have charged him falsely, in declaring that he forged deeds, in which a direct descent was claimed for these Western Bramins from Brama himself, the chief god of Hindoo idolatry; but it is certain, that in this or some other mode he made the new faith so popular, that twelve, or as some accounts state, seventy of the Indian Bramins became his coadjutors; and after his death, with the collusion of the Portuguese priests, the new sect went on still triumphing. But even the Romish see repudiated such conversions as these; and a bull from the Vatican extinguished the next communion. To this same able but treacherous laborer belongs the fame of another kindred achievement. He composed in the language of the country a treatise in

favor of Christianity. The work had the title of the Ezour Vedam. It was intended to sap the skepticism of the East ; but so covertly, though with much ability, did it undertake the task, that having been translated and reaching France, where it fell into the hands of Voltaire, he pounced upon it as an ancient Braminical treatise, full of oriental wisdom, and proving that Christianity had borrowed its chief doctrines from Eastern sources. Thus, while laboring to destroy unbelief in India, he became in the next century instrumental in aiding its progress in Europe. The Jesuit, caught in his own snare, was made from his grave to lend weapons to the scoffer ; while the arch-mocker, the patriarch of French infidelity, entangled in the toils of that wilful credulity which has distinguished so many eminent unbelievers, quoted the work of modern Jesuitism as an undoubted monument of ancient Braminism. Thus are the wise taken in their own craftiness, when in their self-confidence they undertake either to patronize or to impugn the gospel of the Nazarene.

“We need scarcely to name another defect of the Jesuit missions, which must have occurred to all. *Their fatal neglect of the Scriptures.* Even Xavier translated into Japanese but the creed, the Lord’s Prayer, and a brief catechism, and afterwards a Life of the Saviour, compiled from the gospels. The Lives of the Saints afterwards appeared in that language. In the tongue of China the Jesuits acquired such proficiency as to become voluminous authors, writing, it is said, hundreds of books ; but although they translated the ponderous Sum of Theology of Thomas Aquinas into Chinese, the Scriptures seem to have been thought a needless or dangerous book, and a compend of the gospel history was, we believe,

their chief work in the form of scriptural translation. With no religious light but that emanating from the altar and pulpit, their churches were, when persecution veiled these, left in thick darkness. The Jesuits, anxious to shut up their converts into a safe and orthodox submission, seem to have preferred this fearful risk, to the peril of leaving the lively oracles to beam forth their living brightness upon the minds of their people. Hence the Catholics, lingering still in the Celestial Empire, and their Indian neophytes in Paraguay and California, have probably never known, scarce even by name, those Scriptures which are the rightful heritage of every Christian. Nor, for their own use, even, did their missionaries prize the Bible aright. Does the Jesuit father appear in the midst of a savage tribe to harangue them on his religion ; or is he dragged by them a dauntless victim to the stake ; the one volume that is seen suspended from his neck, is not the Bible, but his breviary. In all this, the Jesuit was but acting with other Romanists. That church has assumed the fearful responsibility of shutting out the sunlight of divine revelation ; undertaking in its stead to supply the reflected light, the moonbeams of tradition,—a gentler brightness, under which no eye will be dazzled, by which no mind will be quickened into too rapid a vegetation,—a dubious gloom, favorable alike to wonder, to fear, to slumber, and to fraud. But as the sun will shine, so the Scriptures live on. They who preach the truth, but give not the Bible, withhold from their own teachings the most authoritative sanction. Those, on the contrary, whose doctrine is a doctrine of falsehood, contravening and superseding the Scriptures, must yet one day meet that light they would have obscured, and

find themselves and all their doings tried by the standard they would have fain displaced.” \*

The temporizing policy of the Jesuits in prosecuting their missions in China, could not escape the notice of the opponents of that crafty and powerful order; and accordingly, we find that about the commencement of the eighteenth century, the question arose in the Romish church whether this amalgamation of heathenism with Christianity was a lawful method of multiplying converts. This was decided by Pope Clement XI., in the year 1704, against the Jesuits, and the Chinese *converts* were forbidden by a solemn edict any longer to practise the idolatrous rites of their nation in connection with their professed Christian worship. This edict, however, so displeased the Jesuit missionaries, that the same Pope, dreading the consequences of exasperating so powerful an order, deemed it politic to issue another edict a few years later, which in effect nullified the provisions of the former. This latter decree, which was dated in 1715, allowed the heathen ceremonies referred to, upon condition that they should be regarded, not as *religious* but *civil* institutions; a distinction which might serve to satisfy the conscience of the Pope in thus authorizing the ceremonies of heathenism, but would have not the slightest effect on the feelings of the Chinese devotee in mingling in the same act of devotion, the worship of Confucius and of Christ.

\* Christian Review, Vol. VI., page 184, &c.

## APPENDIX D.—PAGE 121.

### SPRINKLING OF HORSES AT ROME.

THIS absurd ceremony is regularly observed at Rome on St. Anthony's day, the 17th of January. On that day the inhabitants of the city of Rome and vicinity send their horses, &c., decked with ribands, to the convent of St. Anthony, which is situated near the church of St. Mary the Great. A Roman Catholic priest in his sacerdotal garments, stands at the church door, with a large sprinkling-brush in his hand, and as each animal is presented to him, he takes off his skull-cap, mutters a few words, in Latin, intimating that through the merits of the blessed St. Anthony, they are to be preserved for the coming year from sickness and death, famine and danger, then dips his brush in a huge bucket of holy water, that stands by him, and sprinkles them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Sometimes the visitor at Rome will see a splendid equipage drive up, attended by outriders, in elegant livery, to have the horses thus sprinkled with holy water, all the people remaining uncovered till the absurd and disgusting ceremony is over. On one occasion a traveller observed a countryman, whose

beast having received the holy water, set off from the church door at a gallop, but had scarcely gone a hundred yards before the ungainly animal tumbled down with him, and over its head he rolled into the dust. He soon, however, arose, and so did the horse, without either seeming to have sustained much injury. The priest looked on, and though his blessing had failed, he was not out of countenance; while some of the by-standers said that but for it, the horse and his rider might have broken their necks.

A recent eye-witness of this ceremony, writes as follows: "If I could lead my readers, on the 17th of January, to the church of St. Antoin in Rome, I am convinced they would not know whether they should laugh at the ridiculous religious performances, or weep over the heathenish practices of the church of Rome. He would see a priest in his sacerdotal garments, with a stole over his neck, a brush in his right hand, and sprinkling the mules, asses, and horses with holy water, and praying for them and with them, and blessing them in order to be preserved the whole year from sickness and death, famine and danger, for the sake and merits of the holy Antony. All this is a grotesque scene, so grotesque that no American can have any idea of it, and heathen priests would never have thought of it. Add to that, the great mass of people, the kickings of the mules, the meetings of the lovers, the neighings of

the horses, the melodious voices of the asses, the shoutings of the multitude, and mockings of the protestants, who reside in Rome, and you have a spectacle, which would be new, entirely new, not only for American protestants, but for the heathen themselves, and must be abominable in the eye of God. But enough ; the subject is too serious ; it is a religious exercise, practised by the priests of Rome, in the so-called metropolis of the Christian world, sanctioned by the self-styled infallible head of the church of Rome. All we can say is : ‘Ichabod, thy glory is departed.’ The priests of *heathen* Rome would be ashamed of such a religious display in the nineteenth century.”\*

\* Papal Rome as it Is, page 52.













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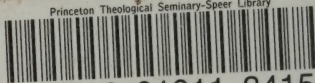
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